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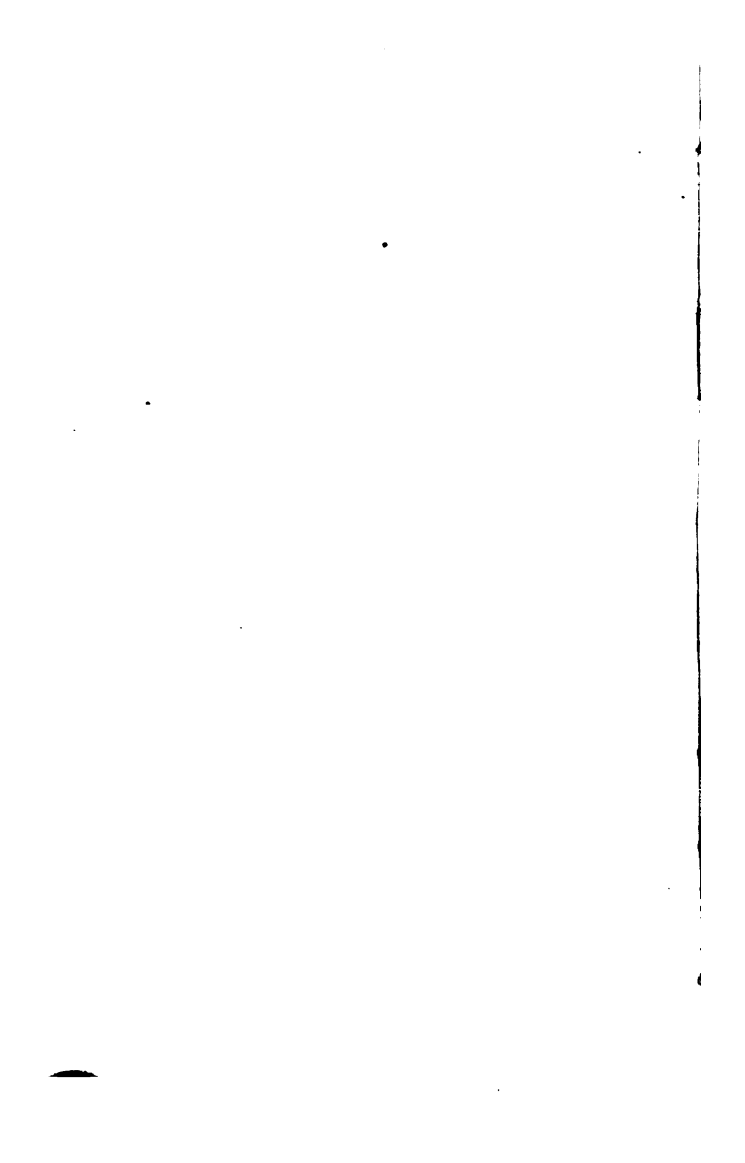
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Frederick
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Comus

The Maid of the Mill —

Lionel and Clarissa —

The School for Fathers —

Love in a Village

Beggars Opera

Rule a Wife

Have a Wife

The Wonder —

The Committee —

Amphitryon —

She stoops to conquer

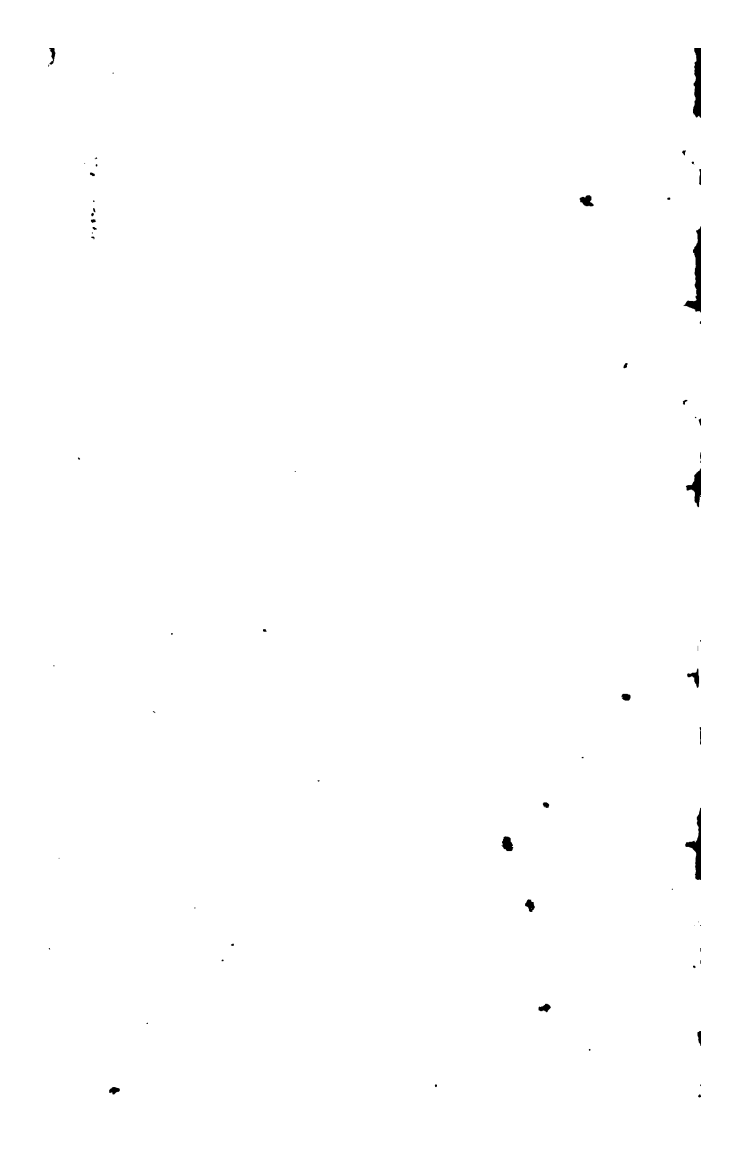
The country Saps

Every Man in his Humours

The Gamesters —

Bold Stroke for a Wife

Suspicious Husband



^{Richard}
The Fashionable ^{Leaves} ~~Leaves~~

^{William Whitelocke}
The School for Lovers

The choleric Man

^{George Colman}
The Jealous Wife

^{Richard Cumberland}
The Natural Son

^{Richard Cumberland}
The Brothers

^{Leaves}
The conscious Lovers

^{Leaves}
The tender Husband

^{George Colman}
The Pious Stratagem

The Miser

The Drummer

Double Gallant

The constant Couple
^{all from a certain way}

The Hypocrite

^{Dr. Jones}
The fair Quaker of Deal

The Busy Body

The country Girl

The Chances

Love makes a Man } — 30 }
The spanish Fryar }

The provoked Husband } _____

The careless Husband } _____

The Alchemist } _____

Love for Love } _____

The goodnatured Man } _____

The Foundling } _____

The Minor } _____

The recruiting Officer } _____

The west Indian } _____

The way to keep him } _____

All in the wrong } _____

The School for Wives } _____

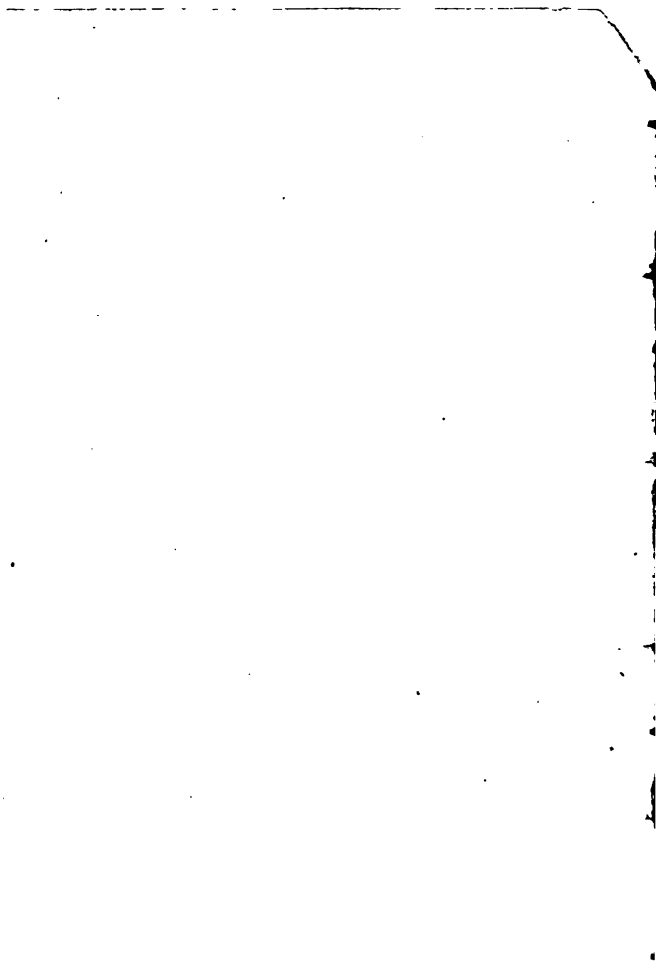
The Refusal } _____

The clandestine Marriage } _____

She would & he would not } _____

The Discovery } _____

The Confederacy } _____



TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA.

A

TRAGEDY,

BY MR. JAMES THOMSON.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRES-ROYAL,

DRURY-LANE AND COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOKS,

By Permission of the Managers.

“ The lines distinguished by inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation, and those printed in Italics are the additions of the Theatres.”

LONDON :

Printed for the Proprietors, under the Direction of
JOHN BELL, *British Library*, STRAND,
Bookseller to His Royal Highness the Prince of Wales.

M DCC X CII.



*Gift
Gladstone Family
4-30-32*

V. 1-12, 15-30 TO

HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS
FREDERICK,
PRINCE OF WALES.

S I R,

THE honour your Royal Highness has done me in the protection you was pleased to give to this Tragedy, emboldens me to lay it now at your feet, and beg your permission to publish it under Royal Patronage. The favouring and protecting of letters has been, in all ages and countries, one distinguishing mark of a great prince; and that with good reason, not only as it shews a justness of taste, and elevation of mind, but as the influence of such a protection, by exciting good writers to labour with more emulation in the improvement of their several talents, not a little contributes to the embellishment and instruction of society. But of all the different species of writing, none has such an effect upon the lives and manners of men, as the dramatic; and therefore, that of all others most deserves the attention of princes; who, by a judicious approbation of such pieces as tend to promote all public and private virtue, may more than by any coercive methods, secure the purity of the stage, and in consequence thereof, greatly advance the morals and politeness of their people. How eminently your Royal Highness has always

extended your favour and patronage to every art and science, and in a particular manner to dramatic performances, is too well known to the world for me to mention it here. Allow me only to wish, that what I have now the honour to offer to your Royal Highness, may be judged not unworthy of your protection, at least in the sentiments which it inculcates. A warm and grateful sense of your goodness to me, makes me desirous to seize every occasion of declaring in public, with what profound respect and dutiful attachment, I am,

Sir,

Your Royal Highness's

most obliged,

most obedient, and

most devoted servant,

JAMES THOMSON.

TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA.

THIS is the only play of THOMSON's that has been of late performed upon our theatres. The genius of this amiable Poet did not naturally lead him to Tragedy: the desire of profit seems to have induced him to become a Tragic Poet, in which walk of literature his superiors are much more numerous than in the descriptive and the allegoric.

Drawing, however, from a master so consummate as LE SAGE, the present play could not but be interesting and busy; displaying events suitable to the ends of Tragedy, as calling forth terror, and demanding pity.

It is singular that THOMSON should not have hinted at the source from which TANCRED was derived. His age, however, might have scrupled a drama drawn from GIL BLAS. The incidents therein are closely followed, and there appears to be much poetic address and classical purity in the disposition of the circumstances and the colouring of the sentiments.

PROLOGUE.

*BOLD is the man! who, in this nicer age,
Presumes to tread the chaste corrected stage.
Now, with gay tinsel arts, we can no more
Conceal the want of nature's sterling ore.
Our spells are vanish'd, broke our magic wand,
That us'd to waft you over sea and land.
Before your light the fairy people fade,
The demons fly---the ghost itself is laid.
In vain of martial scenes the loud alarms,
The mighty prompter thundering out to arms,
The playhouse passe clattering from afar,
The close-wedg'd battle, and the din of war.
Now, even the senate seldom we convene;
The yawning fathers nod behind the scene.
Your taste rejects the glittering false sublime,
To sigh in metaphor, and die in rhyme.
High rant is tumbled from his gallery throne:
Description, dreams---nay, similies are gone.*

*What shall we then? to please you how devise,
Whose judgment sits not in your ears nor eyes?
Thrice happy! could we catch great Shakspeare's art,
To trace the deep recesses of the heart:
His simple, plain sublime, to which is given
To strike the soul with darted flame from heaven:*

*Could we awake soft Otway's tender woe,
The pomp of verse and golden lines of Rowe.*

*We to your hearts apply : let them attend ;
Before their silent, candid bar we bend.
If warm'd, they listen, 'tis our noblest praise :
If cold, they wither all the muse's bays.*

Dramatis Personae.

DRURY-LANE.

	<i>Men.</i>
TANCRED, <i>Count of Lecce,</i>	Mr. Kemble.
MATTEO SIFFREDI, <i>Lord High Chancellor of Sicily,</i>	Mr. Bensley.
EARL OSMOND, <i>Lord High Constable of Sicily,</i>	Mr. Barrymore.
RODOLPHO, <i>Friend to Tancred, and Captain of the Guards,</i>	Mr. Benson.

	<i>Women.</i>
SIGISMUNDA, <i>Daughter of Siffredi,</i>	Mrs. Powell.
LAURA, <i>Sister of Rodolpho, and Friend to Sigismunda.</i>	Mrs. Kemble.

Barons, Officers, Guards, &c.

SCENE, the City of Palermo in Italy.

COVENT-GARDEN.

	<i>Men.</i>
TANCRED, <i>Count of Lecce,</i>	Mr. Holman.
MATTEO SIFFREDI, <i>Lord High Chancellor of Sicily,</i>	Mr. Hull.
EARL OSMOND, <i>Lord High Constable of Sicily,</i>	Mr. Farren.
RODOLPHO, <i>Friend to Tancred, and Captain of the Guards,</i>	Mr. Macready.

	<i>Women.</i>
SIGISMUNDA, <i>Daughter of Siffredi,</i>	Mrs. Merry.
LAURA, <i>Sister of Rodolpho, and Friend to Sigismunda,</i>	Mrs. Mountain.

Barons, Officers, Guards, &c.

SCENE, the City of Palermo in Italy.



TANCRED AND SIGISMUNDA.

ACT I. SCENE I.

The Palace. Enter SIGISMUNDA and LAURA.

Sigismunda.

Ah, fatal day to Sicily! the king
Touches his last moments!

Laura. So 'tis fear'd.

Sig. "The death of those distinguish'd by their
station,

" But by their virtue more, awakes the mind

" To solemn dread, and strikes a saddening awe;

" Not that we grieve for them, but for ourselves,

" Left to the toil of life—And yet the best

" Are, by the playful children of this world,

" At once forgot, as they had never been."

Laura, 'tis said, the heart is sometimes charged

With a prophetic sadness: such, methinks,

Now hangs on mine. The king's approaching death

Suggests a thousand fears. What troubles thence

May throw the state once more into confusion,

What sudden changes in my father's house
May rise, and part me from my dearest Tancred,
Alarms my thoughts.

Laura. The fears of love-sick fancy !
Perversely busy to torment itself.
But be assured, your father's steady friendship,
Join'd to a certain genius, that commands,
Not kneels to fortune, will support and cherish,
Here in the public eye of Sicily,
This, I may call him, his adopted son,
The noble Tancred, form'd to all his virtues.

Sig. Ah, form'd to charm his daughter !—This fair
morn
Has tempted far the chase. Is he not yet
Return'd ?

Laura. No.—When your father to the king,
Who now expiring lies, was call'd in haste,
He sent each way his messengers to find him ;
With such a look of ardour and impatience,
As if this near event was to Count Tancred
Of more importance than I comprehend.

Sig. There lies, my Laura, o'er my Tancred's birth
A cloud I cannot pierce. With princely accost,
Nay, with respect, which oft I have observ'd,
Stealing at times submissive o'er his features,
In Belmont's woods my father rear'd this youth—
Ah, woods ! where first my artless bosom learn'd
The sighs of love.—He gives him out the son
Of an old friend, a baron of Apulia,
Who in the late crusado bravely fell.

But then 'tis strange ; is all his family
As well as father dead ? and all their friends,
Except my sire, the generous good Siffredi ?
Had he a mother, sister, brother left,
The last remain of kindred ; with what pride,
What rapture, might they fly o'er earth and sea,
To claim this rising honour of their blood !
This bright unknown ! this all-accomplish'd youth !
Who charms too much, the heart of Sigismunda !
" Laura, perhaps your brother knows him better,
" The friend and partner of his freest hours."
What says Rodolpho ? Does he truly credit
This story of his birth ?

Laura. He has sometimes,
Like you, his doubts ; yet, when maturely weigh'd,
Believes it true. As for Lord Tancred's self,
He never entertain'd the slightest thought
That verg'd to doubt ; but oft laments his state,
By cruel fortune so ill pair'd to yours.

Sig. Merit like his, the fortune of the mind,
Beggars all wealth—Then, to your brother, Laura,
He talks of me ?

Laura. Of nothing else. Howe'er
The talk begin, it ends with Sigismunda.
Their morning, noontide, and their evening walks,
Are full of you, and all the woods of Belmont
Enamour'd with your name——

Sig. Away, my friend ;
You flatter——yet the dear delusion charms.

Laura. No, Sigismunda, 'tis the strictest truth,

Nor half the truth, I tell you. Even with fondness
My brother talks for ever of the passion
That fires young Tancred's breast. So much it
strikes him,

He praises love as if he were a lover.

"He blames the false pursuits of vagrant youth,

"Calls them gay folly, a mistaken struggle

"Against best judging nature." Heaven, he says,

In lavish bounty form'd the heart for love ;

In love included all the finer seeds

Of honour, virtue, friendship, purest bliss——

Sig. Virtuous Rodolpho !

Laura. Then his pleasing theme

He varies to the praises of your lover——

Sig. And what, my Laura, says he on the subject ?

Laura. He says that, though he was not nobly born,
Nature has form'd him noble, generous, brave,

"Truly magnanimous, and warmly scorning

"Whatever bears the smallest taint of baseness ;

"That every easy virtue is his own ;

"Not learnt by painful labour, but inspir'd,

"Implanted in his soul."—Chiefly one charm

He in his graceful character observes ;

That though his passions burn with high impatience,

And sometimes, from a noble heat of nature,

Are ready to fly off ; yet the least check

Of ruling reason brings them back to temper,

And gentle softness.

Sig. True ! Oh, true, Rodolpho !

Blest be thy kindred worth for loving his !

He is all warmth, all amiable fire,

All quick heroic ardour! temper'd soft
 With gentleness of heart, and manly reason!
 If virtue were to wear a human form,
 To light it with her dignity and flame,
 Then soft'ning mix her smiles and tender graces;
 Oh, she would choose the person of my Tancred!
 Go on my friend, go on, and ever praise him;
 The subject knows no bounds, nor can I tire,
 While my breast trembles to that sweetest music!
 The heart of woman tastes no truer joy,
 Is never flattered with such dear enchantment——
 “ 'Tis more than selfish vanity”—as when
 She hears the praises of the man she loves——
Laura. Madam, your father comes.

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. [*To an attendant as he enters.*] Lord Tancred
 Is found?

At. My lord, he quickly will be here.

“ I scarce could keep before him, though he bid me

“ Speed on, to say he would attend your orders.”

Sif. 'Tis well——retire——You too, my daughter,
 leave me.

Sig. I go, my father—But how fares the king?

Sif. He is no more. Gone to that awful state,
 Where kings the crown wear only of their virtues.

Sig. How bright must then be his!—This stroke is
 sudden;

He was this morning well, when to the chase
 Lord Tancred went.

Sif. 'Tis true. But at his years
Death gives short notice—Drooping nature then,
Without a gust of pain to shake it, falls.
His death, my daughter, was that happy period
Which few attain. The duties of his day
Were all discharg'd, “and gratefully enjoy'd
“Its noblest blessings;” calm as evening skies
Was his pure mind, and lighted up with hopes
That open heaven; when, for his last long sleep
Timely prepar'd, a lassitude of life,
A pleasing weariness of mortal joy,
Fell on his soul, and down he sunk to rest.
Oh, may my death be such!—He but one wish
Left unfulfill'd, which was to see Count Tancred—

Sig. To see Count Tancred!—Pardon me, my
lord—

Sif. For what, my daughter?—But, with such
emotion,
Why did you start at mention of Count Tancred?

Sig. Nothing—I only hop'd the dying king
Might mean to make some generous just provision
For this your worthy charge, this noble orphan.

Sif. And he has done it largely—Leave me now—
I want some private conference with Lord Tancred.

[*Exeunt Sigismunda and Laura.*]

My doubts are but too true—If these old eyes
Can trace the marks of love, a mutual passion
Has seiz'd, I fear, my daughter and this prince,
My sovereign now—Should it be so? Ah, there,
There lurks a brooding tempest, that may shake

My long concerted scheme, to settle firm
The public peace and welfare, which the king
Has made the prudent basis of his will——
Away, unworthy views! you shall not tempt me!
Nor interest, nor ambition shall seduce
My fix'd resolve——Perish the selfish thought,
Which our own good prefers to that of millions!
He comes, my king, unconscious of his fortune.

Enter TANCRED.

Tan. My lord Siffredi, in your looks I read,
Confirm'd, the mournful news that fly abroad
From tongue to tongue——We then, at last have lost
The good old king?

Sif. Yes, we have lost a father!
The greatest blessing Heaven bestows on mortals,
“ And seldom found amidst these wilds of time.”
A good, a worthy king!—Hear me, my Tancred,
And I will tell thee, in a few plain words,
How he deserv'd that best, that glorious title.
“ 'Tis nought complex, 'tis clear as truth and virtue.”
He lov'd his people, deem'd them all his children;
The good exalted, and depress'd the bad.
“ He spurn'd the flattering crew, with scorn reject'd
“ Their smooth advice that only means themselves,
“ Their schemes to aggrandize him into baseness;
“ Nor did he less disdain the secret breath,
“ The whisper'd tale, that blights a virtuous name.”
He sought alone the good of those for whom
He was entrusted with the sovereign power:

Well knowing that a people in their rights
And industry protected ; living safe
Beneath the sacred shelter of the laws,
“ Encouraged in their genius, arts and labours,
“ And happy each as he himself deserves,”
Are ne’er ungrateful. With unsparing hand
They will for him provide : their filial love
And confidence are his unfailing treasure,
And every honest man his faithful guard.

Tan. A general face of grief o’erspreads the city.
I mark’d the people, as I hither came,
In crowds assembled, struck with silent sorrow,
And pouring forth the noblest praise of tears.
“ Those, whom remembrance of their former woes,
“ And long experience of the vain illusions
“ Of youthful hope, had into wise consent
“ And fear of change corrected, wrung their hands,
“ And, often casting up their eyes to heav’n;
“ Gave sign of sad conjecture. Others shew’d,
“ Athwart their grief, or real or affected,
“ A gleam of expectation, from what chance
“ And change might bring.” A mingled murmur ran
Along the streets ; and from the lonely court
Of him who can no more assist their fortunes,
I saw the courtier-fry, with eager haste,
All hurrying to Constantia.

Sif. Noble youth !
I joy to hear from thee these just reflections,
Worthy of riper years—But if they seek
Constantia, trust me, they mistake their course.

Tan. How! Is she not, my Lord, the late king's sister,

Heir to the crown of Sicily? the last
Of our fam'd Norman line, and now our queen?

Sif. Tancred, 'tis true; she is the late king's sister,
The sole surviving offspring of that tyrant
William the Bad—"so for his vices stil'd;
"Who spilt much noble blood, and sore oppress'd;
"Th' exhausted land: whence grievous wars arose,
"And many a dire convulsion shook the state.
"When he, whose death Sicilia mourns to-day,
"William, who has and well deserved the name
"Of Good, succeeding to his father's throne,
"Reliev'd his country's woes—But to return;
"She is the late king's sister," born some months
After the tyrant's death, but not next heir.

Tan. You much surprise me—May I then presume
To ask who is?

Sif. Come nearer, noble Tancred,
Son of my care. I must, on this occasion,
Consult thy generous heart; which, when conducted
By rectitude of mind and honest virtues,
Gives better counsel than the hoary head—
Then know, there lives a prince, here in Palermo,
The lineal offspring of our famous hero,
Roger the First.

Tan. Great Heaven! How far remov'd
From that our mighty founder?

Sif. His great grandson:

Sprung from his eldest son, who died untimely,
Before his father.

Tan. Ha ! the prince you mean,
Is he not Manfred's son ? The generous, brave,
Unhappy Manfred ! whom the tyrant William,
You just now mention'd, not content to spoil
Of his paternal crown, threw into fetters,
And infamously murder'd ?

Sif. Yes, the same.

Tan. " By heavens, I joy to find our Norman reign,
" The world's sole light amidst these barbarous ages,
" Yet rears its head ; and shall not, from the lance,
" Pass to the feeble distaff."—But this prince,
Where has he lain conceal'd ?

Sif. The late good king,
By noble pity mov'd, contriv'd to save him
From his dire father's unrelenting rage,
And had him rear'd in private, as became
His birth and hopes, with high and princely nurture,
Till now, too young to rule a troubled state,
By civil broils most miserably torn,
He in his safe retreat has lain conceal'd,
His birth and fortune to himself unknown ;
But when the dying king to me intrusted,
As to the chancellor of the realm, his will,
His successor he nam'd him.

Tan. Happy youth !
He then will triumph o'er his father's foes,
O'er haughty Osmond, and the tyrant's daughter.

Sif. Ay, that is what I dread—the heat of youth ;

There lurks, I fear, perdition to the state,
 I dread the horrors of rekindled war :
 Though dead, the tyrant still is to be fear'd ;
 His daughter's party still is strong and numerous :
 Her friend, Earl Osmond, Constable of Sicily,
 Experienc'd, brave, high-born, of mighty interest.
 Better the prince and princess should by marriage
 Unite their friends, their interest, and their claims !
 Then will the peace and welfare of the land
 On a firm basis rise.

Tan. My Lord Siffredi,
 If by myself I of this prince may judge,
 That scheme will scarce succeed—Your prudent age
 In vain will counsel, if the heart forbid it—
 But wherefore fear ? The right is clearly his ;
 “ And, under your direction, with each man
 “ Of worth, and stedfast loyalty, to back
 “ At once the king's appointment and his birthright,
 “ There is no ground for fear. They have great odds,
 “ Against th' astonished sons of violence,
 “ Who fight with awful justice on their side.”
 All Sicily will rouse, all faithful hearts,
 Will range themselves around Prince Manfred's son.
 For me, I here devote me to the service
 Of this young prince ; I every drop of blood
 Will lose with joy, with transport in his cause—
 “ Pardon my warmth—but that, my lord, will never
 “ To this decision come”—Then find the prince ;
 Lose not a moment to awaken in him
 The royal soul. Perhaps he, now desponding,

Pines in a corner, and laments his fortune ;
That in the narrower bounds of private life
He must confine his aims, those swelling virtues
Which from his noble father he inherits.

Sif. Perhaps, regardless, in the common bane
Of youth he melts, in vanity and love.
But if the seeds of virtue glow within him,
I will awake a higher sense, a love
That grasps the loves and happiness of millions.

Tan. Why that surmise ? Or should he love, *Siffredi*,
I doubt not, it is nobly, which will raise
And animate his virtues—Oh, permit me
To plead the cause of youth—Their virtue oft,
In pleasure's soft enchantment lull'd a while,
Forgets itself ; it sleeps and gayly dreams,
Till great occasion rouse it ; then, all flame,
It walks abroad, with heighten'd soul and vigour,
And by the change astonishes the world.

“ Even with a kind of sympathy, I feel
“ The joy that waits this prince ; when all the powers,
“ Th' expanding heart can wish, of doing good ;
“ Whatever swells ambition, or exalts
“ The human soul into divine emotions,
“ All crowd at once upon him.

“ *Sif.* Ah, my *Tancred*,
“ Nothing so easy as in speculation,
“ And at a distance seen, the course of honour,
“ A fair delightful champaign strew'd with flowers.
“ But when the practice comes ; when our fond
passions,

" Pleasure and pride, and self-indulgence, throw
 " Their magic dust around, the prospect roughens ;
 " Then dreadful passes, craggy mountains rise,
 " Cliffs to be scal'd, and torrents to be stem'd ;
 " Then toil ensues, and perseverance stern ;
 " And endless combats with our grosser sense,
 " Oft lost, and oft renew'd ; and generous pain
 " For others felt ; and, harder lesson still !
 " Our honest bliss for others sacrific'd ;
 " And all the rugged task of virtue quells
 " The stoutest heart of common resolution.
 " Few get above this turbid scene of strife.
 " Few gain the summit, breathe that purest air,
 " That heavenly ether, which untroubled sees
 " The storm of vice and passion rage below.
 " *Tan.* Most true, my lord. But why thus au-
 gur ill ?
 " You seem to doubt this prince. I know him not.
 " Yet, oh, methinks, my heart could answer for him !
 " The juncture is so high, so strong the gale
 " That blows from Heaven, as through the dearest
 soul

" Might breathe the godlike energy of virtue."

Sif. Hear him, immortal shades of his great fa-
thers !—

Forgive me, Sir, this trial of your heart.

Thou ! thou, art he !

Tan. Siffredi !

Sif. Tancred, thou !

Thou art the man of all the many thousands

That toil upon the bosom of this isle,
By Heaven elected to command the rest,
To rule, protect them, and to make them happy!

Tan. Manfred my father! I the last support
Of the fam'd Norman line, that awes the world!
I, who this morning wander'd forth an orphan,
Outcast of all but thee, my second father!
Thus call'd to glory! to the first great lot
Of human kind!—Oh, wonder-working hand,
That, in majestic silence, sways at will
The mighty movements of unbounded nature;
Oh, grant me, Heaven, the virtues to sustain
This awful burden of so many heroes!
Let me not be exalted into shame,
Set up the worthless pageant of vain grandeur.
Meantime I thank the justice of the king,
Who has my right bequeath'd me. Thee Siffredi,
I thank thee—Oh, I ne'er enough can thank thee!
Yes, thou hast been—thou art—shalt be my father!
Thou shalt direct my unexperienc'd years,
Shalt be the ruling head, and I the hand.

Sif. It is enough for me—to see my sovereign
Assert his virtues, and maintain his honour.

Tan. I think, my lord, you said the king com-
mitted
To you his will. I hope it is not clogg'd
With any base conditions, any clause,
To tyrannize my heart, and to Constantia
Enslave my hand devoted to another.
The hint you just now gave of that alliance,

You must imagine, wakes my fear. But know,
 In this alone I will not bear dispute,
 Not even from thee, Siffredi!—Let the council
 Be strait assembled, and the will there open'd :
 Thence issue speedy orders to convene,
 This day ere noon, the senate : where those barons,
 Who now are in Palermo, will attend,
 To pay their ready homage to the king,
 “ Their rightful king, who claims his native crown,
 “ And will not be a king by deeds and parchments.”

Sif. I go, my liege. But once again permit me
 To tell you—Now, is the trying crisis,
 That must determine of your future reign.
 Oh, with heroic rigour watch your heart !
 And to the sovereign duties of the king,
 Th’ unequall’d pleasures of a god on earth,
 Submit the common joys, the common passions,
 Nay, even the virtues of the private man.

Tan. Of that no more. They not oppose, but aid,
 Invigorate, cherish, and reward each other.
 “ The kind all-ruling wisdom is no tyrant.”

[Exit Siffredi.]

Tan. Now, generous Sigismunda, comes my turn
 To shew my love was not of thine unworthy,
 When fortune bade me blush to look to thee.
 But what is fortune to the wish of love ?
 A miserable bankrupt ! “ Oh, ’tis poor,
 “ ’Tis scanty all, whate’er we can bestow !
 “ The wealth of kings is wretchedness and want !”
 Quick, let me find her ! taste that highest joy,

Th' exalted heart can know, the mix'd effusion
Of gratitude and love !—Behold, she comes !

Enter SIGISMUNDA.

Tan. My fluttering soul was all on wing to find thee,
My love, my Sigismunda !

Sif. Oh, my Tancred !
Tell me, what means this mystery and gloom
That lowers around ? Just now, involv'd in thought,
My father shot athwart me—You, my lord,
Seem strangely mov'd—I fear some dark event,
From the king's death to trouble our repose,
That tender calm we in the woods of Belmont
So happily enjoy'd—Explain this hurry,
What means it ? Say.

Tan. It means that we are happy !
Beyond our most romantic wishes happy !

Sig. You but perplex me more.

Tan. It means, my fairest,
That thou art queen of Sicily ; and I
The happiest of mankind ! “ than monarch more ! ”
Because with thee I can adorn my throne.
Manfred, who fell by tyrant William's rage,
Fam'd Roger's lineal issue, was my father. [*Pausing.*
You droop, my love ; dejected on a sudden ;
You seem to mourn my fortune—The soft tear
Springs in thy eye—Oh, let me kiss it off—
Why this, my Sigismunda ?

Sig. Royal Tancred,
None at your glorious fortune can like me

Rejoice ;—yet me alone, of all Sicilians,
It makes unhappy.

Tan. I should hate it then !

Should throw, with scorn, the splendid ruin from
me !—

No, Sigismunda, 'tis my hope with thee
To share it, whence it draws its richest value.

Sig. You are my sovereign—I at humble distance—

Tan. Thou art my queen ! the sovereign of my soul !

“ You never reign'd with such triumphant lustre,
“ Such winning charms as now ; yet, thou art still”
The dear, the tender, generous Sigismunda !
“ Who, with a heart exalted far above
“ Those selfish views that charm the common breast,
“ Stoop'd from the height of life and courted beauty,
“ Then, then, to love me, when I seem'd of fortune
“ The hopeless outcast, when I had no friend,
“ None to protect and own me, but thy father.
“ And wouldst thou claim all goodness to thyself ?
“ Canst thou thy Tancred deem so dully form'd,
“ Of such gross clay, just as I reach'd the point—
“ A point my wildest hopes could ne'er imagine—
“ In that great moment, full of every virtue,
“ That I should then so mean a traitor prove
“ To the best bliss and honour of mankind,
“ So much disgrace the human heart, as then,
“ For the dead form of flattery and pomp,
“ The faithless joys of courts, to quit kind truth,
“ The cordial sweets of friendship and of love,
“ The life of life ! my all, my Sigismunda !

" I could upbraid thy fears, call them unkind,

" Cruel, unjust, an outrage to my heart,

" Did they not spring from love.

" *Sig.* Think not, my lord,

" That to such vulgar doubts I can descend."

Your heart, I know, disdains the little thought

Of changing with the vain, external change

Of circumstance and fortune. " Rather thence

" It would, with rising ardour, greatly feel

" A noble pride, to shew itself the same."

But, ah! the hearts of kings are not their own.

" There is a haughty duty that subjects them

" To chains of state, to wed the public welfare,

" And not indulge the tender, private virtues."

Some high-descended princess, who will bring

New power and interest to your throne, demands

Your royal hand—perhaps Constantia——

Tan. She!

Oh, name her not! were I this moment free

And disengag'd as he who " never felt,

" The powerful eye of beauty," never sigh'd

For matchless worth like thine, I should abhor

All thoughts of that alliance. Her fell father

Most basely murder'd mine; " and she, his daughter,

" Supported by his barbarous party still,

" His pride inherits, his imperious spirit,

" And insolent pretensions to my throne."

And canst thou deem me, then, so poorly tame,

So cool a traitor to my father's blood,

As from the prudent cowardice of state

E'er to submit to such a base proposal ?

" Detested thought ! Oh, doubly, doubly hateful !

" From the two strongest passions ; from aversion

" To this Constantia—and from love to thee.

" Custom, 'tis true, a venerable tyrant,

" O'er servile man extends a blind dominion :

" The pride of kings enslaves them ; their ambition,

" Or interest, lords it o'er the better passions.

" But vain their talk, mask'd under specious words

" Of station, duty, and of public good."

They whom just Heaven has to a throne exalted,

To guard the rights and liberties of others,

What duty binds them to betray their own !

" For me, my free-born heart shall bear no dictates,

" But those of truth and honour ; wear no chains,

" But the dear chains of love, and Sigismunda !"

Or if indeed, my choice must be directed

By views of public good, whom shall I choose

So fit to grace, to dignify a crown,

And beam sweet mercy on a happy people,

As thee, my love ? Whom place upon my throne

But thee, descended from the good Siffredi ?

" 'Tis fit that heart be thine, which drew from him

" Whate'er can make it worthy thy acceptance."

Sig. Cease, cease to raise my hopes above my duty.

Charm me no more, my Tancred !—Oh, that we

In those blest woods, where first you won my soul,

Had pass'd our gentle days ; far from the toil

And pomp of courts ! Such is the wish of love ;

" Of love that, with delightful weakness, knows

" No bliss, and no ambition but itself.

" But in the world's full light, those charming dreams,

" Those fond illusions vanish. Awful duties!

" The tyranny of men, even your own heart,

" Where lurks a sense your passion stifles now,

" And proud imperious honour call you from me."

'Tis all in vain—you cannot hush a voice

That murmurs here—I must not be persuaded!

Tan. [*Kneeling.*] Hear me, thou soul of all my hopes and wishes!

And witness Heaven, prime source of love and joy!

Not a whole warring world combin'd against me;

" Its pride, its splendor, its imposing forms,

" Nor interest, nor ambition, nor the face

" Of solemn state, not even thy father's wisdom,"

Shall ever shake my faith to Sigismunda!

[Trumpets and acclamations heard.]

But, hark! the public voice to duties call me,

Which with unwearied zeal I will discharge;

And thou, yes, thou, shalt be my bright reward—

Yet—ere I go—to hush thy lovely fears,

Thy delicate objections—*[Writes his name.]* Take this blank,

Sign'd with my name, and give it to thy father:

Tell him, 'tis my command, it be fill'd up

With a most strict and solemn marriage-contract.

How dear each tie! how charming to my soul!

That more unites me to my Sigismunda.

*For thee, and for my people's good to live,
Is all the bliss which sovereign power can give.*

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

A grand Saloon. Enter SIFFREDI.

Siffredi.

So far 'tis well—The late king's will proceeds
Upon the plan I counsel'd ; that Prince Tancred
Shall make Constantia partner of his throne.
Oh, great, oh, wish'd event ! “whence the dire seeds
“ Of dark intestine broils, of civil war,
“ And all its dreadful miseries and crimes,
“ Shall be for ever rooted from the land.
“ May these dim eyes, long blasted by the rage
“ Of cruel faction and my country's woes,
“ Tir'd with the toils and vanities of life,
“ Behold this period, then be clos'd in peace !”
But how this mighty obstacle surmount,
Which love has thrown betwixt ? “ Love, that dis-
turbs
“ The schemes of wisdom still ; that, wing'd with
passion,
“ Blind and impetuous in its fond pursuits,
“ Leaves the grey-headed reason far behind.
“ Alas, how frail the state of human bliss !
“ When even our honest passions oft destroy it.

" I was to blame, in solitude and shades,
" Infectious scenes! to trust their youthful hearts.
" Would I had mark'd the rising flame, that now
" Burns out with dangerous force!"—My daughter
owns

Her passion for the king; she trembling own'd it,
With prayers, and tears, and tender supplications,
That almost shook my firmness—And this blank,
Which his rash fondness gave her, shews how much,
To what a wild extravagance he loves—
I see no means—it foils my deepest thought—
How to controul this madness of the king,
That wears the face of virtue, and will thence
Disdain restraint, " will, from his generous heart,
" Borrow new rage, even speciously oppose
" To reason reason"—But it must be done.
" My own advice, of which I more and more
" Approve, the strict conditions of the will,
" Highly demand his marriage with Constantia;
" Or else her party has a fair pretence—
" And all at once is horror and confusion—
" How issue from this maze?"—The crowding
barons

Here summon'd to the palace, meet already,
To pay their homage, and confirm the will.
On a few moments hang the public fate,
On a few hasty moments—Ha! there shone
A gleam of hope—Yes, with this very paper
I yet will save him—" Necessary means,
" For good and noble ends, can ne'er be wrong.

" In that resistless, that peculiar case,
 " Deceit is truth and virtue——But how hold
 " This lion in the toil?——Oh, I will form it
 " Of such a fatal thread, twist it so strong
 " With all the ties of honour and of duty,
 " That his most desperate fury shall not break
 " The honest snare."——Here is the royal hand—
 I will beneath it write a perfect, full,
 And absolute agreement to the will;
 Which read before the nobles of the realm
 Assembled, in the sacred face of Sicily,
 Constantia present, every heart and eye
 Fix'd on their monarch, every tongue applauding,
 He must submit, his dream of love must vanish—
 It shall be done——To me, I know, 'tis ruin;
 But safety to the public, to the king.
 I will not reason more, " I will not listen
 " Even to the voice of honour."——No—'tis fix'd!
 I here devote me for my prince and country;
 Let them be safe, and let me nobly perish!
 Behold, Earl Osmond comes, without whose aid
 My schemes are all in vain.

Enter OSMOND.

Osm. My Lord Siffredi,
 I from the council hasten'd to Constantia,
 And have accomplish'd what we there propos'd.
 The princess to the will submits her claims.
 She with her presence means to grace the senate,
 And of your royal charge, young Tancred's hand,

Accept. " At first, indeed, it shock'd her hopes
" Of reigning sole, this new, surprising scene
" Of Manfred's son, appointed by the king,
" With her joint heir——But I so fully shew'd
" The justice of the case, the public good,
" And sure establish'd peace which thence would rise,
" Join'd to the strong necessity that urg'd her,
" If on Sicilia's throne she meant to sit,
" As to the wise disposal of the will
" Her high ambition tam'd." Methought, besides,
I could discern, that not from prudence merely
She to this choice submitted.

Sif. Noble Osmond,
You have in this done to the public great
And signal service. Yes, I must avow it;
This frank and ready instance of your zeal,
In such a trying crisis of the state,
" When interest and ambition might have warp'd
" Your views, I own this truly generous virtue"
Upbraids the rashness of my former judgment.

Os. Siffredi, no. To you belongs the praise;
" The glorious work is yours. Had I not seiz'd,
" Improv'd the wish'd occasion to root out
" Division from the land, and sav'd my country,
" I had been base and infamous for ever."
'Tis you, my lord, to whom the many thousands,
That by the barbarous sword of civil war
Had fallen inglorious, owe their lives; " to you
" The sons of this fair isle, from her first peers
" Down to the swain who tills her golden plains,

“ Owe their safe homes, their soft domestic hours,
 “ And through late time posterity shall bless you,
 “ You who advis’d this will.”—I blush to think
 I have so long oppos’d the best good man
 In Sicily——“ With what impartial care
 “ Ought we to watch o’er prejudice and passion,
 “ Nor trust too much the jaundic’d eye of party !
 “ Henceforth its vain delusions I renounce,
 “ Its hot determinations, that confine
 “ All merit and all virtue to itself.”
 To yours I join my hand ; with you will own
 No interest and no party but my country..
 Nor is your friendship only my ambition :
 There is a dearer name, the name of father,
 By which I should rejoice to call Siffredi.
 Your daughter’s hand would to the public weal
 Unite my private happiness.

Sif. My lord,
 You have my glad consent. To be allied
 To your distinguish’d family and merit,
 I shall esteem an honour. From my soul
 I here embrace Earl Osmond as my friend
 And son.

Osm. You make him happy. This assent,
 “ So frank and warm, to what I long have wish’d,
 “ Engages all my gratitude ; at once,
 “ In the first blossom, it matures our friendship.”
 I from this moment vow myself the friend
 And zealous servant of Siffredi’s house.

Enter an Officer belonging to the Court.

Off. [*To Siffredi.*] The king, my lord, demands your speedy presence.

Sif. I will attend him strait—Farewell, my lord ;
The senate meets : there, a few moments hence,
I will rejoin you.

Osm. There, my noble lord,
We will complete this salutary work ;
Will there begin a new auspicious era.

[*Exeunt Siffredi and Officer.*]

Siffredi gives his daughter to my wishes—
But does she give herself ? Gay, young, and flatter'd,
Perhaps engag'd, will she her youthful heart
Yield to my harsher, uncomplying years ?
I am not form'd, by flattery and praise,
By sighs and tears, and all the whining trade
Of love, to feed a fair-one's vanity ;
To charm at once and spoil her. These soft arts
Nor suit my years nor temper ; these be left
To boys and doting age. A prudent father,
By nature charg'd to guide and rule her choice,
Resigns his daughter to a husband's power,
Who with superior dignity, with reason,
And manly tenderness, will ever love her ;
Not first a kneeling slave, and then a tyrant.

Enter Barons.

“ My lords, I greet you well. This wondrous day
“ Unites us all in amity and friendship.

" We meet to-day with open hearts and looks,
 " Not gloom'd by party, scowling on each other,
 " But all the children of one happy isle,
 " The social sons of liberty. No pride,
 " No passion now, no thwarting views divide us :
 " Prince Manfred's line, at last to William's join'd,
 " Combine us in one family of brothers.
 " This to the late good king's well-ordered will,
 " And wise Siffredi's generous care, we owe.
 " I truly give you joy. First of you all,
 " I here renounce those errors and divisions
 " That have so long disturb'd our peace, and seem'd,
 " Fermenting still, to threaten new commotions——
 " By time instructed, let us not disdain
 " To quit mistakes. We all, my lords, have err'd.
 " Men may, I find, be honest, though they differ.

" *1st Baron.* Who follows not, my lord, the fair
 example

" You set us all, whate'er be his pretence,
 " Loves not with single and unbiass'd heart,
 " His country as he ought.

" *2nd Baron.* Oh, beauteous peace !
 " Sweet union of a state ! what else but thou
 " Gives safety, strength, and glory to a people ?
 " I bow, lord constable, beneath the snow
 " Of many years ; yet in my breast revives
 " A youthful flame. Methinks, I see again
 " Those gentle days renew'd, that bless'd our isle,
 " Ere by this wasteful fury of division,
 " Worse than our *Ætna's* most destructive fires,

- " It desolated sunk. I see our plains
" Unbounded waving with the gifts of harvest ;
" Our seas with commerce throng'd ; our busy ports
" With cheerful toil. Our Enna blooms afresh ;
" Afresh the sweets of thymy Hybla flow.
" Our nymphs and shepherds sporting in each vale,
" Inspire new song, and wake the pastoral reed—
" The tongue of age is fond—Come, come, my sons ;
" I long to see this prince, of whom the world
" Speaks largely well—His father was my friend,
" The brave unhappy Manfred—Come, my lords ;
" We tarry here too long.

Enter two Officers keeping off the Crowd.

- " *One of the Crowd.* Shew us our king,
" The valiant Manfred's son, who lov'd the people—
" We must, we will behold him—Give us way.
" *1st Off.* Pray, gentlemen, give back—it must
not be—
" Give back, I pray——on such a glad occasion,
" I would not ill entreat the lowest of you.
" *2nd Man of the Crowd.* Nay, give us but a glimpse
of our young king.
" We, more than any Baron of them all,
" Will pay him due allegiance.
" *2nd Off.* Friends—indeed
" You cannot pass this way——We have strict orders,
" To keep for him himself, and for the Barons,
" All these apartments clear——Go to the gate
" That fronts the sea, you there will find admission.

“ *Omnes.* Long live king Tancred! Manfred’s son
—huzza! [Crowd goes off.]”

Enter 1st Officer.

1st Off. *My lord, the king is rob’d, the senate sits,
And waits your presence.* [Exit Osmond and Barons.
[Shouts within.]

Enter 2nd Officer.

2nd Off. *I have not seen
So wild a tumult ; the town is mad with transport ;
Shew us our king, they cry, our Norman king,
The valiant Manfred’s son, who lov’d the people.
In vain I told ’em, that we had strict orders
To keep for him himself, and for the Barons,
All these apartments clear. Nought could
Appease their storm of zeal ; ’till at
The northern gate, that fronts the sea,
I promis’d them admittance.*

1st Off. *I do not marvel at their rage of joy :
He is a brave and amiable prince.
When in my Lord Siffredi’s house I liv’d,
Ere by his favour I obtain’d this office,
I there remember well the young Count Tancred.
To see him and to love him were the same ;
He was so noble in his ways, yet still
So affable and mild—Well, well, old Sicily,
Yet happy days await thee !*

2nd Off. *Grant it, Heaven !
“ We have seen sad and troublesome times enough.”*

He is, they say, to wed the late king's sister,
Constantia.

1st Off. Friend, of that I greatly doubt.
Or I mistake, or Lord Siffredi's daughter,
The gentle Sigismunda, has his heart.
If one may judge by kindly cordial looks,
And fond assiduous care to please each other,
Most certainly they love—Oh, be they blest,
As they deserve! It were great pity aught
Should part a matchless pair; the glory he,
And she the blooming grace of Sicily!

2nd Off. My Lord Rodolpho comes.

Enter RODOLPHO from the Senate.

Rod. My honest friends,
You may retire. [*Officers go out.*] A storm is in the
wind.

This will perplexes all. No, Tancred never
Can stoop to these conditions, which at once
Attack his rights, his honour, and his love.

“ Those wise old men, those plodding, grave, state
pedants,

“ Forget the course of youth; their crooked pru-
dence,

“ To baseness verging still, forgets to take

“ Into their fine-spun schemes the generous heart,

“ That, through the cobweb system bursting, lays

“ Their labours waste—So will this business prove,

“ Or I mistake the king—back from the pomp

“ He seem'd at first to shrink, and round his brow

" I mark'd a gath'ring cloud, when, by his side,
 " As if design'd to share the public homage,
 " He saw the tyrant's daughter. But confess'd,
 " At least to me the doubling tempest frown'd,
 " And shook his swelling bosom," when he heard
 Th' unjust, the base conditions of the will.
 Uncertain, tost in cruel agitation,
 He oft, methought, address'd himself to speak,
 And interrupt Siffredi; who appear'd,
 With conscious haste, to dread that interruption,
 And hurry'd on——But hark! I hear a noise,
 As if th' assembly rose——" Ha! Sigismunda,
 " Oppress'd with grief, and wrapp'd in pensive
 sorrow,
 " Passes along.
 " [Sigismunda and attendants pass through the back
 scene.]"

Enter LAURA.

Laura. Your high-prais'd friend, the king,
 Is false, most vilely false. The meanest slave
 Had shewn a nobler heart; " nor grossly thus,
 " By the first bait ambition spread, been gull'd."
 He Manfred's son! away! it cannot be!
 The son of that brave prince could ne'er " betray
 " Those rights so long usurp'd from his great father,
 " Which he, this day, by such amazing fortune,
 " Had just regain'd; he ne'er could" sacrifice
 All faith, all honour, gratitude, and love,
 " Even just resentment of his father's fate,

Tan. Such honour I renounce ; with sovereign scorn
Greatly detest it, and its mean adviser !
Hast thou not dar'd beneath my name to shelter,
“ My name, for other purposes design'd,
“ Given from the fondness of a faithful heart,
“ With the best love o'erflowing !—Hast thou not”
Beneath thy sovereign's name, basely presum'd
To shield a lie—a lie, in public utter'd,
To all deluded Sicily ? But know,
This poor contrivance is as weak as base.
“ In such a wretched toil none can be held,
“ But fools and cowards—Soon thy flimsy arts,
“ Touch'd by my just, my burning indignation,
“ Shall burst like threads in flame—Thy doating
prudence
“ But more secures the purpose it would shake.
“ Had my resolves been wavering and doubtful,
“ This would confirm them, make them fix'd as fate ;
“ This adds the only motive that was wanting
“ To urge them on through war and desolation.”
What ! marry her ! Constantia ! her ! the daughter
Of the fell tyrant who destroy'd my father !
The very thought is madness ! Ere thou seest
The torch of Hymen light these hated nuptials,
Thou shalt behold Sicilia wrapt in flames,
Her cities raz'd, her vallies drench'd with slaughter—
Love set aside, my pride assumes the quarrel ;
My honour now is up ; in spite of thee,
A world combin'd against me, I will give
This scatter'd will in fragments to the winds,

Assert my rights, the freedom of my heart,
Crush all who dare oppose me to the dust,
And heap perdition on thee!

Sif. Sir, 'tis just.

Exhaust on me thy rage; I claim it all.
But for these public threats thy passion utters,
'Tis what thou canst not do.

Tan. I cannot! ha!

"Driven to the dreadful brink of such dishonour,
"Enough to make the tamest coward brave,
"And into fierceness rouse the mildest nature,"
What shall arrest my vengeance? Who?

Sif. Thyself.

Tan. Away! Dare not to justify thy crime!
That, that alone can aggravate its horror,
Add insolence to insolence—perhaps
May make my rage forget——

Sif. Oh, let it burst

On this grey head, devoted to thy service!
But when the storm has vented all its fury,
Thou then must hear—nay more, I know thou wilt—
Wilt hear the calm, yet stronger voice of reason.
"Thou must reflect that a whole people's safety,
"The weal of trusted millions, should bear down,
"Thyself the judge, the fondest partial pleasure."
Thou must reflect that there are other duties,
"A nobler pride, a more exalted honour,
"Superior pleasures far, that will oblige,
"Compel thee, to abide by this my deed;
"Unwarranted perhaps in common justice,

“ But which necessity, ev’n virtue’s tyrant,
“ With awful voice commanded”—Yes, thou must,
In calmer hours, divest thee of thy love,
These common passions of the vulgar breast,
This boiling heat of youth, and be a king,
The lover of thy people!

Tan. “ Truths, ill employ’d,
“ Abus’d to colour guilt!—A king! a king!”
Yes, I will be a king, but not a slave;
In this will be a king; in this my people
Shall learn to judge how I will guard their rights,
When they behold me vindicate my own.
But have I, say, been treated like a king?—
Heavens! could I stoop to such outrageous usage!
I were a mean, a shameless wretch, unworthy
To wield a sceptre in a land of slaves,
A soil abhorr’d of virtue; should belie
My fathers blood, belie those very maxims,
At other times you taught my youth—Siffredi!

[In a softened tone of voice.]

Sif. Behold, my prince, thy poor old servant,
Whose darling care, these twenty years, has been
To nurse thee up to virtue; “ who, for thee,
“ Thy glory and thy weal, renounces all,
“ All interest or ambition can pour forth;
“ What many a selfish father would pursue
“ Through treachery and crimes:” behold him here,
Bent on his feeble knees, to beg, conjure thee,
With tears to beg thee to controul thy passion,
And save thyself, thy honour, and thy people!

Kneeling with me, behold the many thousands
 To thy protection trusted ; fathers, mothers,
 The sacred front of venerable age,
 The tender virgin, and the helpless infant ;
 “ The ministers of Heav’n, those who maintain,
 “ Around thy throne, the majesty of rule ;
 “ And those whose labour, scorch’d by winds and sun,
 “ Feeds the rejoicing public ;” see them all
 Here at thy feet conjuring thee to save them
 From misery and war, from crimes and rapine !
 “ Can there be aught, kind Heaven, in self-indul-
 gence
 “ To weigh down these, this aggregate of love,
 “ With which compar’d, the dearest private passion
 “ Is but the wafted dust upon the balance ?”
 Turn not away——Oh, is there not some part
 In thy great heart, so sensible to kindness,
 And generous warmth, some nobler part, to feel
 The prayers and tears of these, the mingled voice
 Of heaven and earth ?

Tan. There is, and thou hast touch’d it.
 Rise, rise, Siffredi——Oh, thou hast undone me !
 Unkind old man !——Oh, ill-entreated Tancred !
 Which way so’er I turn, dishonour rears
 Her hideous front—and misery and ruin.
 “ Was it for this you took such care to form me !
 “ For this imbu’d me with the quickest sense
 “ Of shame ; these finer feelings, that ne’er vex
 “ The common mass of mortals, dully happy
 “ In bless’d insensibility ? Oh, rather

" You should have sear'd my heart, taught me that
power

" And splendid interest lord it still o'er virtue ;

" That, gilded by prosperity and pride,

" There is no shame, no meanness ; temper'd thus,

" I had been fit to rule a venal world.

" Alas ! what meant thy wantonness of prudence ?"

Why have you rais'd this miserable conflict

Betwixt the duties of the king and man ?

Set virtue against virtue ?——" Ah, Siffredi !

" Tis thy superfluous, thy unfeeling wisdom,

" That has involv'd me in a maze of error

" Almost beyond retreat"——But hold, my soul,

Thy steady purpose——Tost by various passions

To this eternal anchor keep——There is,

Can be no public without private virtue——

Then, mark me well, observe what I command ;

" It is the sole expedient now remaining——"

To-morrow, when the senate meets again,

Unfold the whole, unravel the deceit ;

" Nor that alone ; try to repair its mischief ;

" There all thy power, thy eloquence and interest

" Exert to reinstate me in my rights,

" And from thy own dark snares to disembroil me."——

Start not, my lord——This must and shall be done !

Or here our friendship ends——Howe'er disguis'd,

Whatever thy pretence, thou art a traitor.

Sif. I should indeed deserve the name of traitor,
And even a traitor's fate, had I so slightly,

From principles so weak, done what I did,
As e'er to disavow it——

Tan. Ha!

Sif. My liege,
Expect not this——Though practis'd long in courts,
I have not so far learn'd their subtle trade,
To veer obedient with each gust of passion.
I honour thee, I venerate thy orders,
But honour more my duty. Nought on earth
Shall ever shake me from that solid rock,
Nor smiles, nor frowns.——

Tan. You will not then?

Sif. I cannot.

Tan. Away! begone!—Oh, my Rodolpho, come,
And save me from this traitor! Hence, I say.

“ Avoid my presence strait! and know, old man,

“ Thou, my worst foe beneath the mask of friendship,

“ Who, not content to trample in the dust

“ My dearest rights, dost with cool insolence

“ Persist, and call it duty; hadst thou not

“ A daughter that protects thee, thou shouldst feel

“ The vengeance thou deservest.”——No reply!

Away!

[*Exit Siffredi.*]

Enter RODOLPHO.

Rod. What can incense my prince so highly
Against his friend Siffredi!

Tan. Friend! Rodolpho?

When I have told thee what this friend has done,
How play'd me like a boy, a base-born wretch,

Who had nor heart nor spirit, thou wilt stand
Amaz'd, and wonder at my stupid patience.

“ *Rod.* I heard, with mix'd astonishment and grief,
“ The king's unjust, dishonourable will,
“ Void in itself—I saw you stung with rage,
“ And writhing in the snare; just as I went,
“ At your command to wait you here—but that
“ Was the king's deed, not his. . .

“ *Man.* Oh, he advis'd it !
“ These many years he has in secret hatch'd
“ This black contrivance, glories in the scheme,
“ And proudly plumes him with his traiterous virtue.
“ But that was nought, Rodolpho, nothing, nothing !
“ Oh, that was gentle, blameless to what follow'd !
“ I had, my friend, to Sigismunda given,
“ To hush her fears, in the full gush of fondness,
“ A blank sign'd with my hand—and he, Oh,
 heavens !

“ Was ever such a wild attempt !—he wrote
“ Beneath my name an absolute compliance
“ To this detested will, nay, dar'd to read it
“ Before myself, on my insulted throne
“ His idle pageant plac'd—Oh, words are weak
“ To paint the pangs, the rage, the indignation,
“ That whirl'd from thought to thought my soul in
 tempest,

“ Now on the point to burst, and now by shame
“ Repress'd—But in the face of Sicily,
“ All mad with acclamation, what, Rodolpho,
“ What could I do? the sole relief that rose

- " To my distracted mind, was to adjourn
 " Th' assembly till to-morrow—But to-morrow
 " What can be done ?—Oh, it avails not what !
 " I care not what is done—My only care
 " Is how to clear my faith with Sigismunda.
 " She thinks me false ! She cast a look that kill'd me !
 " Oh ! I am base in Sigismunda's eye !
 " The lowest of mankind, the most perfidious !
 " *Rod.* This was a strain of insolence indeed,
 " A daring outrage of so strange a nature
 " As stuns me quite——
 " *Tan.* Curs'd be my timid prudence,
 " That dash'd not back, that moment in his face,
 " The bold presumptuous lie !—and curs'd this hand,
 " That from a start of poor dissimulation,
 " Led off my Sigismunda's hated rival,
 " Ah, then ! what, poison'd by the false appearance,
 " What, Sigismunda, were thy thoughts of me ?
 " How, in the silent bitterness of soul,
 " How didst thou scorn me ! hate mankind, thyself,
 " For trusting to the vows of faithless Tancred ?
 " For such I seem'd—I was—the thought distracts
 me !
 " I should have cast a flattering world aside,
 " Rush'd from my throne, before them all avow'd
 her,
 " The choice, the glory of my free-born heart,
 " And spurn'd the shameful fetters thrown upon it—
 " Instead of that—confusion !—what I did

“ Has clinch'd the chain, confirm'd Siffredi's crime,
“ And fix'd me down to infamy !

“ *Rod.* My Lord,

“ Blame not the conduct which your situation
“ Tore from your tortur'd heart—What could you
do ?

“ Had you, so circumstanc'd, in open senate,
“ Before th' astonish'd public, with no friends
“ Prepar'd, no party form'd, affronted thus
“ The haughty Princess and her powerful faction,
“ Supported by this will, the sudden stroke,
“ Abrupt and premature, might have recoil'd
“ Upon yourself, even your own friends revolted,
“ And turn'd at once the public scale against you.
“ Besides, consider, had you then detected
“ In its fresh guilt this action of Siffredi,
“ You must with signal vengeance have chastis'd
“ The treasonable deed—Nothing so mean
“ As weak insulted power that dares not punish.
“ And how would that have suited with your love ;
“ His daughter present too ? Trust me, your conduct,
“ Howe'er abhorrent to a heart like yours,
“ Was fortunate and wise—Not that I mean
“ E'er to advise submission——

“ *Tan.* Heavens ! submission——

“ Could I descend to bear it, even in thought,
“ Despise me, you, the world, and Sigismunda !
“ Submission !—No !—To-morrow's glorious light
“ Shall flash discovery on the scene of baseness.
“ Whatever be the risque, by heavens, to-morrow,

" I will o'erturn the dirty lie-built schemes
 " Of these old men, and shew my faithful senate,
 " That Manfred's son knows to assert and wear,
 " With undiminish'd dignity, that crown
 " This unexpected day has plac'd upon him."
 But this, my friend, " these stormy gusts of pride
 " Are foreign to my love——Till Sigismunda
 " Be disabus'd, my breast is tumult all,
 " And can obey no settled course of reason.
 " I see her still, I feel her powerful image,
 " That look, where with reproach complaint was
 mix'd,
 " Big with soft wo, and gentle indignation,
 " Which seem'd at once to pity and to scorn me——
 " Oh, let me find her! I too long have left
 " My Sigismunda to converse with tears,
 " A prey to thoughts that picture me a villain.
 " But ah! how, clogg'd with this accursed state,
 " A tedious world, shall I now find access?
 " Her father too—Ten thousand horrors crowd
 " Into the wild, fantastic eye of love——
 " Who knows what he may do? Come then, my
 friend,
 " And by thy sister's hand, oh, let me steal
 " A letter to her bosom—I no longer
 " Can bear her absence, by the just contempt
 " She now must brand me with, inflam'd to madness.
 " Fly, my Rodolpho; fly! engage thy sister
 " To aid my letter." *This black, unheard of outrage,*
I cannot now impart——'Till Sigismunda

Be disabus'd, my breast is tumult all.

Come, then, my friend, and by the hand of Laura,

Oh, let me steal a letter to her bosom,

And this "very" evening

Secure an interview—I would not bear

This rack another day, not for my kingdom.

"Till then, deep plung'd in solitude and shades,

"I will not see the hated face of man."

Thought drives on thought, on passions passions roll;

Her smiles alone can calm my raging soul. [Exeunt.]

ACT III. SCENE I.

A Chamber. SIGISMUNDA alone, sitting in a disconsolate Posture.

AH, tyrant prince! ah more than faithless Tancred!

Ungenerous and inhuman in thy falsehood!

Hadst thou this morning, when my hopeless heart,

Submissive to my fortune and my duty,

Had so much spirit left, as to be willing

To give thee back thy vows, ah! hadst thou then

Confess'd the sad necessity thy state

Impos'd upon thee, and with gentle friendship,

Since we must part at last, our parting soften'd;

I should indeed—I should have been unhappy,

But not to this extreme—"Amidst my grief,

"I had, with pensive pleasure, cherish'd still

"The sweet remembrance of thy former love,

- “ Thy image still had dwelt upon my soul,
 “ And made our guiltless woes not undelightful.
 “ But coolly thus—How couldst thou be so cruel?—
 “ Thus to revive my hopes, to sooth my love,
 “ And call forth all its tenderness, then sink me
 “ In black despair—What unrelenting pride
 “ Possess’d thy breast, that thou couldst bear unmov’d
 “ To see me bent beneath a weight of shame?
 “ Pangs thou canst never feel! How couldst thou
 drag me,
 “ In barbarous triumph at a rival’s car?
 “ How make me witness to a sight of horror?
 “ That hand, which, but a few short hours ago,
 “ So wantonly abus’d my simple faith,
 “ Before th’ attesting world given to another,
 “ Irrevocably given!—There was a time,
 “ When the least cloud that hung upon my brow,
 “ Perhaps imagin’d only, touch’d thy pity.
 “ Then, brighten’d often by the ready tear,
 “ Thy looks were softness all; then the quick heart,
 “ In every nerve alive, forgot itself,
 “ And for each other then we felt alone.
 “ But now, alas! those tender days are fled;
 “ Now thou canst see me wretched, pierc’d with an-
 guish,
 “ With studied anguish of thy own creating,
 “ Nor wet thy harden’d eye—Hold, let me think—
 “ I wrong thee sure; thou canst not be so base,
 “ As meanly in my misery to triumph—
 “ What is it then!—’Tis fickleness of nature,

“ 'Tis sickly love extinguish'd by ambition——”

Is there, kind Heaven, no constancy in man ?

No stedfast truth, no generous fix'd affection,

That can bear up against a selfish world ?

No, there is none—Even Tancred is inconstant !

[*Rising.*

Hence ! let me fly this scene !—Whate'er I see,
These roofs, these walls, each object that surrounds
me,

Are tainted with his vows—But whither fly ?

The groves are worse, the soft retreat of Belmont,

Its deepening glooms, gay lawns, and airy summits,

Will wound my busy memory to torture,

And all its shades will whisper—faithless Tancred !—

My father comes—How, sunk in this disorder,

Shall I sustain his presence ?

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. Sigismunda,

My dearest child ! I grieve to find thee thus

A prey to tears. “ I know the powerful cause

“ From which they flow, and therefore can excuse
them,

“ But not their wilful obstinate continuance.

“ Come, rouse thee then, call up thy drooping spirit,”

Awake to reason from this dream of love,

And shew the world thou art Siffredi's daughter.

Sig. Alas ! I am unworthy of that name.

Sif. Thou art indeed to blame ; thou hast too rashly
Engag'd thy heart, without a father's sanction.

But this I can forgive. "The king has virtues,
 "That plead thy full excuse; nor was I void
 "Of blame, to trust thee to those dangerous virtues.
 "Then dread not my reproaches. Though he blames,
 "Thy tender father pities more than blames thee.
 "Thou art my daughter still;" and, if thy heart
 Will now resume its pride, assert itself,
 And greatly rise superior to this trial,
 I to my warmest confidence again
 Will take thee, and esteem thee more my daughter.

Sig. Oh, you are gentler far than I deserve!
 It is, it ever was, my darling pride,
 To bend my soul to your supreme commands,
 Your wisest will; and though by love betray'd—
 Alas! and punish'd too—I have transgress'd
 The nicest bounds of duty, yet I feel
 A sentiment of tenderness, a source
 Of filial nature springing in my breast,
 That, should it kill me, shall controul this passion,
 And make me all submission and obedience
 To you my honour'd lord, the best of fathers.

Sif. Come to my arms, thou comfort of my age!
 Thou only joy and hope of these grey hairs!
 Come, let me take thee to a parent's heart;
 There, with the kindly aid of my advice,
 Even with the dew of these paternal tears,
 Revive and nourish this becoming spirit——
 Then thou dost promise me, my Sigismunda——
 Thy father stoops to make it his request—
 Thou wilt resign thy fond presumptuous hopes,

And henceforth never more indulge one thought
That in the light of love regards the king?

Sig. Hopes I have none!—Those by this fatal day
Are blasted all—But from my soul to banish,
While weeping memory there retains her seat,
Thoughts which the purest bosom might have cher-
ish'd,

Once my delight, now even in anguish charming,
Is more, my lord, than I can promise.

Sif. Absence, and time, the softener of our passions,
Will conquer this. Meantime, I hope from thee
A generous great effort; that thou wilt now
Exert thy utmost force, nor languish thus
Beneath the vain extravagance of love.
Let not thy father blush to hear it said,
His daughter was so weak, e'er to admit
A thought so void of reason, that a king
Should to his rank, his honour, and his glory,
The high important duties of a throne,
Even to his throne itself, madly prefer
A wild romantic passion, the fond child
Of youthful dreaming thought and vacant hours;
That he should quit his Heaven-appointed station,
Desert his awful charge, the care of all
“ The toiling millions which this isle contains;
“ Nay more, should plunge them into war and ruin,
“ And all to sooth a sick imagination,
“ A miserable weakness”—*What*, must for thee,
To make thee blest, Sicilia be unhappy?
“ The king himself, lost to the nobler sense

“ Of manly praise, become the piteous hero
 “ Of some soft tale, and rush on sure destruction ?
 “ Canst thou, my daughter, let the monstrous thought
 “ Possess one moment thy perverted fancy ?”
 Rouse thee, for shame ! and if a spark of virtue
 Lies slumb’ring in thy soul, bid it blaze forth ;
 Nor sink unequal to the glorious lesson,
 This day thy lover gave thee from his throne.

Sig. Ah, that was not from virtue !—Had, my father,
 That been his aim, I yield to what you say ;
 “ ’Tis powerful truth, unanswerable reason.
 “ Then, then, with sad but duteous resignation,
 “ I had submitted as became your daughter ;
 “ But in that moment, when my humbled hopes
 “ Were to my duty reconcil’d, to raise them
 “ To yet a fonder height than e’er they knew,
 “ Then rudely dash them down—There is the sting !
 “ The blasting view is ever present to me——”
 Why did you drag me to a sight so cruel ?

Sif. It was a scene to fire thy emulation.

Sig. It was a scene of perfidy !—But know,
 I will do more than imitate the king—
 For he is false !—I, though sincerely pierc’d
 With the best, truest passion, ever touch’d
 A virgin’s breast, here vow to Heaven and you,
 Though from my heart I cannot, from my hopes
 To cast this prince—What would you more, my
 father ?

Sif. Yes, one thing more—thy father then is happy—
 “ Though by the voice of innocence and virtue

" Absolv'd, we live not to ourselves alone :

" A rigorous world with peremptory sway,

" Subjects us all, and even the noblest most."

This world from thee, my honour and thy own,
Demands one step ; a step, by which, convinc'd,
The king may see thy heart disdains to wear
A chain which his has greatly thrown aside.

" 'Tis fitting too, thy sex's pride commands thee,

" To shew th' approving world thou canst resign,

" As well as he, nor with inferior spirit,

" A passion fatal to the public weal."

But above all, thou must root out for ever
From the king's breast the least remain of hope,
And henceforth make his mentioned love dishonour.
These things, my daughter, that must needs be done,
Can but this way be done—by the safe refuge,
The sacred shelter of a husband's arms.
And there is one——

Sig. Good heavens ! what means my lord ?

Sif. One of illustrious family, high rank,
Yet still of higher dignity and merit,
Who can and will protect thee ; one to awe
The king himself—Nay, hear me, Sigismunda—
The noble Osmond courts thee for his bride,
And has my plighted word—This day—

Sig. [*Kneeling.*] My father !

Let me with trembling arms embrace thy knees !
Oh, 'if you ever wish to see me happy ;
If e'er in infant years I gave you joy,
When, as I prattling twin'd around your neck,

You snatch'd me to your bosom, kiss'd my eyes,
And melting said you saw my mother there;
Oh, save me from that worst severity
Of fate! Oh, outrage not my breaking heart
To that degree!—I cannot!—'tis impossible!—
So soon withdraw it, give it to another—

“ Hear me, my dearest father; hear the voice
“ Of nature and humanity, that plead
“ As well as justice for me!—Not to choose
“ Without your wise direction may be duty;
“ But still my choice is free—that is a right,
“ Which even the lowest slave can never lose.
“ And would you thus degrade me?—make me base?
“ For such it were to give my worthless person
“ Without my heart, an injury to Osmond,
“ The highest can be done”—Let me, my lord—
Or I shall die, shall, by the sudden change,
Be to distraction shock'd—Let me wear out
My hapless days in solitude and silence,
Far from the malice of a prying world;
At least—you cannot sure refuse me this—
Give me a little time—I will do all,
All I can do, to please you!—“ Oh, your eye
“ Sheds a kind beam——”

Sif. My daughter! you abuse
The softness of my nature—

Sig. Here, my father,
'Till you relent, here will I grow for ever!

Sif. Rise, Sigismunda.—Though you touch my
heart,

Nothing can shake th' inexorable dictates
Of honour, duty, and determin'd reason.
Then by the holy ties of filial love,
Resolve, I charge thee, to receive Earl Osmond,
As suits the man who is thy father's choice,
And worthy of thy hand—I go to bring him—

Sig. Spare me, my dearest father !

Sif. [*Aside.*] I must rush
From her soft grasp, or nature will betray me !
“ Oh, grant us, Heaven ! that fortitude of mind,
“ Which listens to our duty, not our passions”—
Quit me, my child !

Sig. You cannot, oh, my father !
You cannot leave me thus !

Sif. Come hither, Laura,
Come to thy friend. Now shew thyself a friend.
Combat her weakness ; dissipate her tears ;
Cherish, and reconcile her to her duty. [*Exit Siffredi.*]

Enter LAURA.

Sig. Oh, wo on wo ! distress'd by love and duty !
Oh, every way unhappy Sigismunda !

Laura. Forgive me, Madam, if I blame your grief.
How can you waste your tears on one so false ?
Unworthy of your tenderness ; to whom
Nought but contempt is due and indignation ?

Sig. You know not half the horrors of my fate !
I might perhaps have learn'd to scorn his falsehood ;
Nay, when the first sad burst of tears was past,
I might have rous'd my pride and scorn'd himself—

But 'tis too much, this greatest last misfortune—
Oh, whither shall I fly ? Where hide me, Laura,
From the dire scene my father now prepares ?

Laura. What thus alarms you, Madam ?

Sig. Can it be ?

Can I——ah, no !——at once give to another
My violated heart ? in one wild moment ?
He brings Earl Osmond to receive my vows.
Oh, dreadful change ! for Tancred, haughty Osmond.

Laura. Now, on my soul, 'tis what an outrag'd heart
Like yours should wish !——I should, by heavens,
esteem it

Most exquisite revenge !

Sig. Revenge ! on whom ?

On my own heart, already but too wretched !

Laura. On him ! this Tancred ! who has basely sold,
For the dull form of despicable grandeur,
His faith, his love !——At once a slave and tyrant !

Sig. Oh, rail at me, at my believing folly,
My vain ill-founded hopes, but spare him, Laura.

Laura. Who rais'd these hopes ? who triumphs o'er
that weakness ?

Pardon the word——You greatly merit him ;
Better than him, with all his giddy pomp ;
You rais'd him by your smiles when he was nothing.
Where is your woman's pride, that guardian spirit
Given us to dash the perfidy of man ?

Ye powers ! I cannot bear the thought with patience—
“ Yet recent from the most unsparing vows
“ The tongue of love e'er lavish'd ; from your hopes

“ So vainly, idly, cruelly deluded ;”
Before the public thus, before your father,
By an irrevocable solemn deed,
With such inhuman scorn, to throw you from him :
To give his faithless hand yet warm from thine,
With complicated meanness, to Constantia.
And, to complete his crime, when thy weak limbs
Could scarce support thee, then, of thee regardless,
To lead her off.

Sig. That was indeed a sight
To poison love ; to turn it into rage
And keen contempt.—What means this stupid weak-
ness

That hangs upon me ? Hence, unworthy tears.
Disgrace my cheek no more ! No more, my heart,
For one so coolly false or meanly fickle——
“ Oh, it imports not which”—dare to suggest
The least excuse !—Yes, traitor, I will wring
Thy pride, will turn thy triumph to confusion !
“ I will not pine away my days for thee,
“ Sighing to brooks and groves ; while, with vain pity,
“ You in a rival's arms lament my fate——
“ No, let me perish ! ere I tamely be
“ That soft, that patient, gentle Sigismunda,
“ Who can console her with the wretched boast,
“ She was for thee unhappy !——If I am,
“ I will be nobly so !”——Sicilia's daughters
Shall wondering see in me a great example
Of one who punish'd an ill-judging heart,
Who made it bow to what it most abhorr'd !

Crush'd it to misery ! for having thus
So lightly listen'd to a worthless lover !

Laura. At last it mounts, the kindling pride of virtue ;
Trust me, thy marriage will embitter his——

Sig. Oh, may the furies light his nuptial torch !
Be it accurs'd as mine ! for the fair peace,
The tender joys of hymeneal love,
May jealousy awak'd, and fell remorse,
Pour all their fiercest venom through his breast !—
Where the fates lead, and blind revenge, I follow.—
Let me not think—By injur'd love ! I vow,
Thou shalt, base prince ! perfidious and inhuman !
Thou shalt behold me in another's arms ;
In his thou hatest ! Osmond's !

Laura. “ That will grind
“ His heart with secret rage : ” Ay, that will sting
His soul to madness ; “ set him up a terror,
“ A spectacle of wo to faithless lovers ! ”——
Your cooler thought, besides, will of the change
Approve, and think it happy. Noble Osmond
“ From the same stock with him derives his birth,
“ First of Sicilian barons, prudent, brave,
“ Of strictest honour, and by all rever'd——”

Sig. Talk not of Osmond, but perfidious Tancred !
Rail at him, rail ! invent new names of scorn !
Assist me, *Laura* ; lend my rage fresh fuel ;
Support my staggering purpose, which already
Begins to fail me—Ah, my vaunts how vain !
How have I ly'd to my own heart !—Alas,
My tears return, the mighty flood o'erwhelms me !

" Ten thousand crowding images distract
" My tortur'd thought—And is it come to this?
" Our hopes, our vows, our oft repeated wishes,
" Breath'd from the fervent soul, and full of heaven,
" To make each other happy—come to this!"

Laura. If thy own peace and honour cannot keep
Thy resolution fix'd, yet, Sigismunda,
Oh, think, how deeply, how beyond retreat,
Thy father is engag'd.

Sig. Ah, wretched weakness!
That thus enthrals my soul, " that chases thence
" Each nobler thought, the sense of every duty;"
And have I then no tears for thee, my father?
Can I forget thy cares, from helpless years,
Thy tenderness for me? " an eye still beam'd
" With love; a brow that never knew a frown;
" Nor a harsh word thy tongue?" Shall I for these
Repay thy stooping venerable age
With shame, disquiet, anguish, and dishonour?
It must not be!—Thou first of angels! come,
Sweet filial piety, and firm my breast!
Yes, let one daughter to her fate submit,
Be nobly wretched—but her father happy!—
Laura!—they come! Oh, heavens, I cannot stand
The horrid trial!—Open, open earth!
And hide me from their view.

Laura. Madam.

Enter SIFFREDI and OSMOND.

Sif. My daughter,

Behold my noble friend who courts thy hand,
And whom to call my son I shall be proud ;
“ Nor shall I less be pleas’d in this alliance,
“ To see thee happy.”

Osm. Think not, I presume,
Madam, on this your father’s kind consent,
To make me blest. I love you from a heart,
That seeks your good superior to my own ;
And will by every art of tender friendship,
Consult your dearest welfare. May I hope,
Yours does not disavow your father’s choice ?

Sig. I am a daughter, Sir—and have no power
O’er my own heart—I die—Support me, Laura.

[*Faints.*]

Sif. Help—Bear her off—She breathes—my daughter !

Sig. Oh,
Forgive my weakness—soft—my Laura, lead me—
To my apartment. [*Exeunt Sigismunda and Laura.*]

Sif. Pardon me, my Lord,
If by this sudden accident alarm’d,
I leave you for a moment. [*Exit Siffredi.*]

Osm. Let me think——
What can this mean ?——Is it to me aversion ?
Or is it, as I fear’d, she loves another ?
Ha !—yes—perhaps the king, the young Count Tancred ;

They were bred up together——Surely that,
That cannot be—Has he not given his hand,

In the most solemn manner, to Constantia?

Does not his crown depend upon the deed?

“ No—If they lov’d, and this old statesman knew it,

“ He could not to a king prefer a subject.

“ His virtues I esteem—nay more, I trust them——

“ So far as virtue goes—but could he place

“ His daughter on the throne of Sicily——

“ Oh, ’tis a glorious bribe, too much for man!”

What is it then? I care not what it be.

“ My honour now, my dignity demands,

“ That my propos’d alliance, by her father,

“ And even herself accepted, be not scorn’d.

“ I love her too—I never knew till now

“ To what a pitch I love her. Oh, she shot

“ Ten thousand charms into my inmost soul!

“ She look’d so mild, so amiably gentle,

“ She bow’d her head, she glow’d with such confusion,

“ Such loveliness of modesty! She is,

“ In gracious mind, in manners, and in person,

“ The perfect model of all female beauty!”

She must be mine—She is!—If yet her heart

Consents not to my happiness, her duty,

Join’d to my tender cares, will gain so much

Upon her generous nature—That will follow.

The man of sense, who acts a prudent part,

Not flattering steals, but forms himself the heart.

[Exit.]

ACT IV. SCENE I.

*The Garden belonging to SIFFREDI's House. Enter
SIGISMUNDA and LAURA.*

Sigismunda, with a letter in her hand.

'Tis done!—I am a slave!—The fatal vow
Has pass'd my lips!—Methought in those sad mo-
ments,

The tombs around, the saints, the darken'd altar,
And all the trembling shrines with horror shook.
But here is still new matter of distress.

Oh, Tancred, cease to persecute me more!

Oh, grudge me not some calmer state of woe;

Some quiet gloom to shade my hopeless days,

Where I may never hear of love and thee!—

Has Laura, too, conspired against my peace?

Why did you take this letter?—Bear it back——

I will not court new pain. *[Giving her the letter.]*

Laura. Madam, Rodolpho

Urg'd me so much, nay, even with tears conjur'd me,

But this once more to serve th' unhappy king——

For such he said he was——that though enrag'd,

Equal with thee, at his inhuman falsehood,

I could not to my brother's fervent prayers

Refuse this office——Read it——His excuses

Will only more expose his falsehood.

Sig. No:

It suits not Osmond's wife to read one line
From that contagious hand—she knows too well!

Laura. He paints him out distress'd beyond expression ;

Even on the point of madness. “ Wild as winds,
“ And fighting seas, he raves. His passions mix,
“ With ceaseless rage, all in each giddy moment.”
He dies to see you, and to clear his faith.

Sig. Save me from that!—That would be worse
than all!

Laura. I but report my brother's words ; who then
Began to talk of some dark imposition,
That had deceiv'd us all ; when interrupted,
We heard your father and Earl Osmond near,
As summon'd to Constantia's court they went.

Sig. Ha ! imposition ?——Well, if I am doom'd
To be, o'er all my sex, the wretch of love,
In vain I would resist——Give me the letter——
To know the worst is some relief——Alas,
It was not thus, with such dire palpitations,
That, Tancred, once I us'd to read thy letters.

[*Attempting to read the letter, but gives it to Laura.*
Ah, fond remembrance blinds me !—Read it, Laura.

Laura. [*Reads.*] “ Deliver me, Sigismunda, from
“ that most exquisite misery which a faithful heart
“ can suffer—To be thought base by her, from whose
“ esteem even virtue borrows new charms. When
“ I submitted to my cruel situation, it was not false-
“ hood you beheld, but an excess of love. Rather
“ than endanger that, I for a while gave up my ho-

“ nour. Every moment till I see you stabs me with
 “ severer pangs than real guilt itself can feel. Let
 “ me then conjure you to meet me in the garden, to-
 “ wards the close of the day, when I will explain this
 “ mystery. We have been most inhumanly abused ;
 “ and that by the means of the very paper which I
 “ gave you, from the warmest sincerity of love, to
 “ assure to you the heart and hand of

“ **TANCRED.**”

Sig. There, Laura, there, the dreadful secret
 sprung !

That paper ! ah, that paper ! it suggests
 A thousand horrid thoughts—I to my father
 Gave it ! and he perhaps—I dare not cast
 A look that way—If yet indeed you love me,
 Oh, blast me not, kind Tancred, with the truth !
 Oh, pitying keep me ignorant for ever.
 What strange peculiar misery is mine ?
 Reduc'd to wish the man I love were false !
 “ Why was I hurry'd to a step so rash ?
 “ Repairless wo !—I might have waited, sure,
 “ A few short hours—No duty that forbade—
 “ I ow'd thy love that justice ; till this day
 “ Thy love an image of all perfect goodness !
 “ A beam from heaven that glow'd with every virtue !
 “ And have I thrown this prize of life away ?
 “ The piteous wreck of one distracted moment ?
 “ Ah, the cold prudence of remorseless age !
 “ Ah, parents, traitors to your children's bliss !

" Ah, curs'd, ah, blind revenge !—On every hand

" I was betray'd—You, Laura, too, betray'd me!

" *Laura.* Who, who but he, whate'er he writes,
betray'd you?

" Or false or pusillanimous. For once,

" I will with you suppose, that his agreement

" To the king's will was forg'd—Though forg'd by
whom?

" Your father scorns the crime—Yet what avails it?

" This, if it clears his truth, condemns his spirit.

" A youthful king, by love and honour fir'd.

" Patient to sit on his insulted throne,

" And let an outrage, of so high a nature,

" Unpunish'd pass, uncheck'd, uncontradicted—

" Oh, 'tis a meanness equal even to falsehood.

" *Sig.* Laura, no more—We have already judg'd

" Too largely without knowledge. Oft, what seems

" A trifle, a mere nothing, by itself,

" In some nice situation turns the scale

" Of fate, and rules the most important actions.

" Yes, I begin to feel a sad presage!

" I am undone, from that eternal source

" Of human woes—the judgment of the passions.

" But what have I to do with these excuses?

" Oh, cease, my treacherous heart, to give them
room!

" It suits not thee to plead a lover's cause:

" Even to lament my fate is now dishonour.

" Nought now remains, but with relentless purpose,

" To shun all interviews, all clearing up

“ Of this dark scene ; to wrap myself in gloom,
 “ In solitude and shades ; there to devour
 “ The silent sorrows ever swelling here ;
 “ And since I must be wretched—for I must—
 “ To claim the mighty misery myself,
 “ Engross it all, and spare a hapless father.
 “ Hence, let me fly !—The hour approaches——

Laura. Madam,

Behold he comes—the king—

Sig. Heavens ! how escape ?

No—I will stay—This one last meeting—Leave me.

[*Exit Laura.*]

Enter TANCRED.

Tan. And are these long, long hours of torture past ?
 My life ! my Sigismunda !

[*Throwing himself at her feet.*]

Sig. Rise, my lord.

To see my sovereign thus no more becomes me.

Tan. Oh, let me kiss the ground on which you tread !
 Let me exhale my soul in softest transport !

Since I again behold my Sigismunda ! [Rising.

Unkind ! how couldst thou ever deem me false ?

How thus dishonour love ?—“ Oh, I could much

“ Embitter my complaint !---how low were then

“ Thy thoughts of me ? How didst thou then affront

“ The human heart itself ?” After the vows,

The fervent truth, the tender protestations,

Which mine has often pour'd, to let thy breast,

Whate'er th' appearance was, admit suspicion ?

Sig. How ! when I heard myself your full consent
To the late king's so just and prudent will ?
Heard it before you read, in solemn senate ?
When I beheld you give your royal hand,
To her, whose birth and dignity of right
Demands that high alliance ? Yes, my lord,
You have done well. The man whom heaven appoints
To govern others, should himself first learn
To bend his passions to the sway of reason.
In all, you have done well ; but when you bid
My humbled hopes look up to you again,
And sooth'd with wanton cruelty my weakness—
That too was well—My vanity deserv'd
The sharp rebuke, “ whose fond extravagance
“ Could ever dream to balance your repose,
“ Your glory, and the welfare of a people.”

Tan. Chide on, chide on. Thy soft reproaches now,
Instead of wounding, only sooth my fondness.
No, no, thou charming consort of my soul !
I never lov'd thee with such faithful ardour,
As in that cruel miserable moment
You thought me false ; “ when even my honour stoop'd
“ To wear for thee a baffled face of baseness.”
It was thy barbarous father, Sigismunda,
Who caught me in the toil. He turn'd that paper,
Meant for th' assuring bond of nuptial love,
To ruin it for ever ; he, he wrote
That forg'd consent, you heard, beneath my name,
“ Nay, dar'd before my outrag'd throne to read it !”

Had he not been thy father——Ha! my love!
You tremble, you grow pale!

Sig. Oh, leave me Tancred!

Tan. No!—Leave thee!—Never! never till you set
My heart at peace, till these dear lips again
Pronounce thee mine! Without thee, I renounce
Myself, my friends, the world—Here on this hand—

Sig. My lord, forget that hand, which never now
Can be to thine united——

Tan. Sigismunda!

What dost thou mean?—Thy words, thy look, thy
manner,

Seem to conceal some horrid secret—Heavens!——
No—that was wild—Distraction fires the thought!—

Sig. Inquire no more——I never can be thine.

Tan. What, who shall interpose? Who dares attempt
To brave the fury of an injur'd king,
Who, ere he sees thee ravish'd from his hopes,
Will wrap all blazing Sicily in flames?——

Sig. In vain your power, my lord—'Tis fatal error,
Join'd to my father's unrelenting will,
Has plac'd an everlasting bar betwixt us——
I am——Earl Osmond's——wife.

Tan. Earl Osmond's wife!——

*[After a long pause, during which they look at one another
with the highest agitation, and most tender distress.]*

Heavens! did I hear thee right? What! marry'd?
marry'd!

Lost to thy faithful Tancred? lost for ever!
Couldst thou then doom me to such matchless wo,

Without so much as hearing me ?—Distraction !——
Alas ! what hast thou done ? Ah, Sigismunda !
Thy rash credulity has done a deed,
Which, of two happiest lovers that e'er felt
The blissful power, has made two finish'd wretches !
But—madness !—Sure, thou know'st it cannot be !
This hand is mine ! a thousand thousand vows——

Enter OSMOND.

Osm. [*Snatching her hand from the king.*] Madam,
this hand, by the most solemn rites,
A little hour ago, was given to me,
And did not sovereign honour now command me,
Never but with my life to quit my claim,
I would renounce it——thus !

Tan. Ha, who art thou ?
Presumptuous man !

Sig. [*Aside.*] Where is my father ? Heavens !
[*Goes out.*]

Osm. One thou shouldst better know—Yes—view
me, one
Who can and will maintain his rights and honour,
Against a faithless prince, an upstart king,
Whose first base deed is what a harden'd tyrant
Would blush to act.

Tan. Insolent Osmond ! know,
This upstart king will hurl confusion on thee,
And all who shall invade his sacred rights,
Prior to thine—thine, founded on compulsion,
On infamous deceit, “ while his proceed.

“ From mutual love, and free long-plighted faith.
 “ She is, and shall be mine !”—I will annul
 By the high power with which the laws invest me,
 Those guilty forms in which you have entrap’d,
 “ Basely entrap’d, to thy detested nuptials,”
 My queen betroth’d, who has my heart, my hand,
 And shall partake my throne—If, haughty lord,
 If this thou didst not know, then know it now ;
 And know, besides, as I have told thee this,
 Shouldst thou but think to urge thy treason further—
 “ Than treason more ! treason against my love !”—
 Thy life shall answer for it.

Osm. Ha ! my life !——

It moves my scorn to hear thy empty threats.
 When was it that a Norman baron’s life
 Became so vile, as on the frown of kings
 To hang ?—Of that, my lord, the law must judge :
 Or if the law be weak, my guardian sword——

Tan. Dare not to touch it, traitor, lest my rage
 Break loose, and do a deed that misbecomes me.

Enter SIFFREDI.

Sif. My gracious lord, what is it I behold !
 My sovereign in contention with his subjects ?
 Surely this house deserves from royal Tancred
 A little more regard, than to be made
 A scene of trouble, and unseemly jars.
 “ It grieves my soul, it baffles every hope,
 “ It makes me sick of life, to see thy glory

"Thus blasted in the bud."—Heavens! can your highness

From your exalted character descend,
"The dignity of virtue; and, instead
"Of being the protector of our rights,
"The holy guardian of domestic bliss,"
Unkindly thus disturb the sweet repose,
The secret peace of families, for which
Alone the free-born race of man to laws
And government submitted?

Tan. My lord Siffredi,
Spare thy rebuke. The duties of my station
Are not to me unknown. But thou, old man,
Dost thou not blush to talk of rights invaded;
And of our best our dearest bliss disturb'd?
Thou, who with more than barbarous perfidy
Hast trampled all allegiance, justice, truth,
Humanity itself, beneath thy feet?
Thou know'st thou hast—I could, to thy confusion,
Return thy hard reproaches; but I spare thee
Before this lord, for whose ill-sorted friendship
Thou hast most basely sacrific'd thy daughter.
Farewell, my lord.—For thee, lord constable,
Who dost presume to lift thy surly eye
To my soft love, my gentle Sigismunda,
I once again command thee on thy life—
Yes—chew thy rage—but mark me—on thy life,
No further urge thy arrogant pretensions! [*Exit Tan.*]

Osm. Ha! Arrogant pretensions! Heaven and earth!
What! arrogant pretensions to my wife?

My wedded wife ! Where are we ? in a land
 Of civil rule, of liberty and laws ?——
 Not, on my life, pursue them ?——Giddy prince !
 My life disdains thy nod. It is the gift
 Of parent Heaven, who gave me too an arm,
 A spirit to defend it against tyrants.
 “ The Norman race, the sons of mighty Rollo,
 “ Who rushing in a tempest from the north,
 “ Great nurse of generous freemen, bravely won
 “ With their own swords their seats, and still possess
 them
 “ By the same noble tenure, are not us’d
 “ To hear such language——If I now desist,
 “ Then brand me for a coward ! deem me villain !
 “ A traitor to the public ! By this conduct
 “ Deceiv’d, betray’d, insulted, tyranniz’d.”
 Mine is a common cause. My arm shall guard,
 Mix’d with my own, the rights of each Sicilian,
 “ Of social life, and of mankind in general.”
 Ere to thy tyrant rage they fall a prey,
 I shall find means to shake thy tottering throne,
 “ Which this illegal, this perfidious usage
 “ Forfeits at once,” and crush thee in the ruins !——
 Constantia is my queen !

Sif. Lord constable,
 Let us be stedfast in the right ; but let us
 Act with cool prudence, and with manly temper,
 As well as manly firmness. “ True, I own,
 “ Th’ indignities you suffer are so high,
 “ As might even justify what now you threaten.

“ But if, my lord, we can prevent the woes,
“ The cruel horrors of intestine war,
“ Yet hold untouch'd our liberties and laws ;
“ Oh, let us, rais'd above the turbid sphere
“ Of little selfish passions, nobly do it !
“ Nor to our hot, intemperate pride, pour out
“ A dire libation of Sicilian blood.
“ 'Tis godlike magnanimity to keep,
“ When most provok'd, our reason calm and clear,
“ And execute her will from a strong sense
“ Of what is right, without the vulgar aid
“ Of heat and passion, which, though honest, bears us
“ Often too far.” Remember that my house
Protects my daughter still ; and ere I saw her
Thus ravish'd from us, by the arm of power,
This hand should act the Roman father's part.
Fear not ; be temperate ; all will yet be well.
I know the king. “ At first his passions burst
“ Quick as the lightning's flash ; but in his breast
“ Honour and justice dwell”——Trust me, to reason
He will return.

Osm. He will !—By heavens, he shall !——
You know the king—I wish, my lord Siffredi,
That you had deign'd to tell me all you knew——
And would you have me wait, with duteous patience,
Till he return to reason ? Ye just powers !
When he has planted on our necks his foot,
And trod us into slaves ; when his vain pride
Is cloy'd with our submission ; “ if, at last,
“ He finds his arm too weak to shake the frame

“ Of wide-establish’d order out of joint,
 “ And overturn all justice ; then, perchance,
 “ He, in a fit of sickly kind repentance,
 “ May make a merit to return to reason.”
 No, no, my lord ! there is a nobler way,
 To teach the blind oppressive fury reason :
 Oft has the lustre of avenging steel
 Unseal’d her stupid eyes—The sword is reason !

Enter RODOLPHO with Guards.

Rod. My lord high constable of Sicily,
 In the king’s name, and by his special order,
 I here arrest you prisoner of state.

Osm. What king ? I know no king of Sicily,
 Unless he be the husband of Constantia.

Rod. Then know him now—behold his royal orders
 To bear you to the castle of Palermo.

Sif. Let the big torrent foam its madness off.
 Submit, my lord—No castle long can hold
 Our wrongs—This, more than friendship or alliance,
 Confirms me thine ; this binds me to thy fortunes,
 By the strong tie of common injury,
 Which nothing can dissolve—I grieve, Rodolpho,
 To see the reign in such unhappy sort
 Begin.

Osm. The reign ! the usurpation call it !
 This meteor king may blaze a while, but soon
 Must spend his idle terrors—Sir, lead on—
 Farewell, my lord—more than my life and fortune,
 Remember well, is in your hands—my honour !

Sif. Our honour is the same. My son, farewell—
We shall not long be parted. On these eyes
Sleep shall not shed his balm, till I behold thee
Restor'd to freedom, or partake thy bonds.

*Even noble courage is not void of blame,
Till nobler patience sanctifies its flame.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

A Chamber.

Siffredi alone.

THE prospect lowers around. I found the king,
Though calm'd a little, with subsiding tempest,
As suits his generous nature, yet in love
Abated nought, most ardent in his purpose;
Inexorably fix'd, whate'er the risk,
To claim my daughter, and dissolve this marriage—
I have embark'd, upon a perilous sea,
A mighty treasure. “Here the rapid youth,
“Th’ impetuous passions of a lover-king,
“Check my bold purpose; and there, the jealous
pride,
“Th’ impatient honour of a haughty lord,
“Of the first rank, in interest and dependance
“Near equal to the king, forbid retreat.
“My honour too, the same unchang'd conviction,
“That these my measures were, and still remain,
“Of absolute necessity to save

" The land from civil fury, urge me on.
 " But how proceed ?——I only faster rush
 " Upon the desperate evils I would shun.
 " Whate'er the motive be, deceit, I fear,
 " And harsh unnatural force, are not the means
 " Of public welfare, or of private bliss"——
 Bear witness, Heaven ! thou mind-inspecting eye !
 My breast is pure. I have prefer'd my duty,
 The good and safety of my fellow-subjects,
 To all those views that fire the selfish race
 Of mortal men, and mix them in eternal broils.

Enter an Officer belonging to SIFFREDI.

Off. My lord, a man of noble port, his face
 Wrapp'd in disguise, is earnest for admission.

Sif. Go, bid him enter—— [*Officer goes out.*]
 Ha ! wrapp'd in disguise !
 And at this late unseasonable hour !
 " When o'er the world tremendous midnight reigns,
 " By the dire gloom of raging tempest doubled——
Who can it be ?

Enter OSMOND discovering himself.

Sif. " What ! ha !" Earl Osmond, you ?——Wel-
 come, once more,
 To this glad roof !——But why in this disguise ?
 Would I could hope the king exceeds his promise !
 I have his faith, soon as to-morrow's sun
 Shall gild Sicilia's cliffs, you shall be free.——
 Has some good angel turn'd his heart to justice ?

Osm. It is not by the favour of Count Tancred
That I am here. As much I scorn his favour,
As I defy his tyranny and threats——
Our friend Goffredo, who commands the castle,
On my parole, ere dawn to render back
My person, has permitted me this freedom.
Know then ; the faithless outrage of to-day,
By him committed whom you call the king,
Has rous'd Constantia's court. Our friends, the friends
Of virtue, justice, and of public faith,
Ripe for revolt, are in high ferment all.
“ This, this, they say, exceeds whate'er deform'd
“ The miserable days we saw beneath
“ William the Bad. This saps the solid base,
“ At once, of government and private life :
“ This shameless imposition on the faith,
“ The majesty of senates, this lewd insult,
“ This violation of the rights of men,
“ Added to these, his ignominious treatment
“ Of her, th' illustrious offspring of our kings,
“ Sicilia's hope, and now our royal mistress.
“ You know, my lord, how grossly these infringe
“ The late king's will, which orders, if count Tancred
“ Make not Constantia partner of his throne,
“ That he be quite excluded the succession,
“ And she to Henry given, king of the Romans,
“ The potent emperor Barbarossa's son,
“ Who seeks with earnest instance her alliance.”
I thence of you, as guardian of the laws,
As guardian of this will, to you intrusted,

Desire, nay more, demand your instant aid,
To see it put in vigorous execution.

Sif. You cannot doubt, my lord, of my concurrence.

Who, more than I, have labour'd this great point ?

'Tis my own plan ; and if I drop it now,

I should be justly branded with the shame

Of rash advice, or despicable weakness.

But let us not precipitate the matter.

Constantia's friends are numerous and strong ;

Yet Tancred's, trust me, are of equal force :

E'er since the secret of his birth was known,

The people all are in a tumult hurl'd,

Of boundless joy, " to hear there lives a prince

" Of mighty Guiscard's line. Numbers, besides,

" Of powerful barons, who at heart had pin'd,

" To see the reign of their renown'd forefathers,

" Won by immortal deeds of matchless valour,

" Pass from the gallant Normans to the Suevi,

" Will with a kind of rage espouse his cause——

" 'Tis so, my lord——be not by passion blinded——

" 'Tis surely so"——Oh, if our prating virtue

Dwells not in words alone——Oh, let us join,

My generous Osmond, to avert these woes,

And yet sustain our tottering Norman kingdom !

Osmond. But how, Siffredi, how ?——If by soft means

We can maintain our rights, and save our country,

May his unnatural blood first stain the sword,

Who with un pitying fury first shall draw it !

Sif. I have a thought——The glorious work be thine.

“ But it requires an awful flight of virtue,
“ Above the passions of the vulgar breast,
“ And thence from thee I hope it, noble Osmond”—
Suppose my daughter, to her God devoted,
Were plac’d within some convent’s sacred verge,
Beneath the dread protection of the altar——

Osm. Ere then, by heavens! I would “ devoutly
shave

“ My holy scalp,” turn whining monk myself,
And pray incessant for the tyrant’s safety.—
What! How! because an insolent invader,
A sacrilegious tyrant, “ in contempt
“ Of all those noblest rights, which to maintain
“ Is man’s peculiar pride,” demands my wife;
“ That I shall thus betray the common cause
“ Of human kind.”

*What! shall I tamely yield her up,
Even in the manner you propose?—Oh, then
I were supremely vile! degraded! sham’d!
The scorn of manhood! and abhorr’d of honour!*

Sif. There is, my lord, an honour, the calm child
Of reason, of humanity, and mercy,
Superior far to this punctilious demon,
That singly minds itself, and oft embroils
With proud barbarian niceties the world.

Osm. My lord, my lord, I cannot brook your pru-
dence;

It holds a pulse unequal to my blood——
Unblemish’d honour is the flower of virtue!

The vivifying soul! and he who slights it,
Will leave the other dull and lifeless dross.

Sif. No more——You are too warm.

Osm. You are too cool.

Sif. Too cool, my lord? I were indeed too cool,
Not to resent this language, and to tell thee—
I wish Earl Osmond were as cool as I
To his own selfish bliss—ay, and as warm
To that of others——But of this no more—
My daughter is thy wife—I gave her to thee,
And will, against all force, maintain her thine.
But think not I will catch thy headlong passions,
Whirl'd in a blaze of madness o'er the land;
Or, till the last extremity compel me,
Risk the dire means of war——The king, to-morrow,
Will set you free; and, if by gentle means
He does not yield my daughter to your arms,
And wed Constantia, as the will requires,
Why then expect me on the side of justice——
Let that suffice.

Osm. It does—Forgive my heat.

My rankled mind, by injuries inflam'd,
May be too prompt to take, and give offence.

Sif. 'Tis past—Your wrongs, I own, may well
transport

The wisest mind——But henceforth, noble Osmond,
Do me more justice, honour more my truth,
Nor mark me with an eye of squint suspicion——
“ These jars apart—You may repose your soul
“ On my firm faith, and unremitting friendship.

H.

“ Of that I sure have given exalted proof,
“ And the next sun we see shall prove it further.”—
Return, my son, and from your friend Goffredo
Release your word. There try, by soft repose,
To calm your breast.

Osm. Bid the vext ocean sleep,
Swept by the pinions of the raging north—
But your frail age, by care and toil exhausted,
Demands the balm of all-repairing rest.

Sif. Soon as to-morrow's dawn shall streak the skies,
I, with my friends in solemn state assembled,
Will to the palace, and demand your freedom,
Then by calm reason, or by higher means,
The king shall quit his claim, and in the face
Of Sicily, my daughter shall be yours.
Farewell.

Osm. My lord, good night. [*Exit Siffredi.*]
[*After a long pause.*] I like him not—
Yes—I have mighty matter of suspicion.
“ 'Tis plain. I see it lurking in his breast,
“ He has a foolish fondness for this king”——
My honour is not safe, while here my wife
Remains——Who knows but he this very night
May bear her to some convent, as he mentioned——
The king too—though I smother'd up my rage,
I mark'd it well—will set me free to-morrow.
Why not to-night? He has some dark design——
By heavens, he has!—I am abus'd most grossly;
Made the vile tool of this old statesman's schemes;
“ Marry'd to one—ay, and he knew it—one

“ Who loves young Tancred ! Hence her swooning,
tears,

“ And all her soft distress, when she disgrac'd me,

“ By basely giving her perfidious hand

“ Without her heart—Hell and perdition ! this,

“ This is the perfidy !—this is the fell,

“ The keen envenom'd, exquisite disgrace,

“ Which, to a man of honour, even exceeds

“ The falsehood of the person—But I now

“ Will rouse me from the poor tame lethargy,

“ By my believing fondness cast upon me.”

I will not wait his crawling timid motions,

“ Perhaps to blind me meant, which he to-morrow

“ Has promis'd to pursue. No ! ere his eyes

“ Shall open on to-morrow's orient beam,”

I will convince him that Earl Osmond never

Was form'd to be his dupe—“ I know full well

“ Th' important weight and danger of the deed :

“ But to a man, whom greater dangers press,

“ Driven to the brink of infamy and horror,

“ Rashness itself, and utter desperation,

“ Are the best prudence.”—I will bear her off

This night, and lodge her in a place of safety :

I have a trusty band that waits not far.

Hence ! let me lose no time—One rapid moment

Should ardent form, at once, and execute

A bold design—'Tis fix'd—“ 'Tis done !—yes, then,

“ When I have seiz'd the prize of love and honour,

“ And with a friend secur'd her ; to the castle

“ I will repair, and claim Goffredo's promise

“ To rise with all his garrison—My friends
“ With brave impatience wait.” The mine is laid,
And only wants my kindling touch to spring.

[*Exit Osm.*]

SCENE II.

SIGISMUNDA'S Apartment. Enter SIGISMUNDA and
LAURA. [*Thunder.*]

Laura. Heavens! 'tis a fearful night!

Sig. Ah! the black rage
Of midnight tempest, or th' assuring smiles
Of radiant morn, are equal all to me.
Nought now has charms or terrors to my breast,
The seat of stupid woe!—Leave me, my Laura.
Kind rest, perhaps, may hush my woes a little.
Oh, for that quiet sleep that knows no morning!

Laura. Madam, indeed I know not how to go.
Indulge my fondness—Let me watch a while
By your sad bed, 'till these dread hours shall pass.

Sig. Alas! what is the toil of elements, [*Thunder.*]
This idle perturbation of the sky,
To what I feel within?—Oh, that the fires
Of pitying heaven would point their fury here!
Good night, my dearest Laura.

Laura. Oh, I know not
What this oppression means—But 'tis with pain,
With tears, I can persuade myself to leave you—

Well then—Good night, my dearest Sigismunda.

[Exit.

Sig. And am I then alone?—The most undone,
Most wretched being now beneath the cope
Of this affrighting gloom that wraps the world—
I said I did not fear—Ah, me! I feel
A shivering horror run through all my powers!
Oh, I am nought but tumult, fears and weakness!
And yet how idle fear when hope is gone,
Gone, gone for ever!—Oh, thou gentle scene

[Looking towards her bed.

Of sweet repose, where, by th' oblivious draught
Of each sad toilsome day, to peace restor'd,
Unhappy mortals lose their woes awhile,
Thou hast no peace for me!—What shall I do?
How pass this dreadful night, so big with terror?—
Here, with the midnight shades, here will I sit,

[Sitting down.

A prey to dire despair, and ceaseless weep
The hours away—Bless me—I heard a noise——

[Starting up.

No—I mistook—nothing but silence reigns
And awful midnight round—Again!—Oh, heavens!
My lord the king!

Enter TANCRED.

Tan. Be not alarm'd, my love!

Sig. My royal lord, why at this midnight hour,
How came you hither?

Tan. By that secret way

My love contriv'd, when we, in happier days,
Us'd to devote these hours, so much in vain,
To vows of love, and everlasting friendship.

Sig. Why will you thus persist to add new stings
To her distress, who never can be thine?
Oh, fly me! fly! you know——

Tan. I know too much.

Oh, how I could reproach thee, Sigismunda!
Pour out my injur'd soul in just complaints!
But now the time permits not, these swift moments—
I told thee how thy father's artifice
Forc'd me to seem perfidious in thy eyes.

“ Ah, fatal blindness! not to have observ'd

“ The mingled pangs of rage and love that shook me:

“ When by my cruel public situation

“ Compell'd, I only feign'd consent, to gain

“ A little time, and more secure thee mine.”

E'er since—a dreadful interval of care!

My thoughts have been employ'd, not without hope,
How to defeat Siffredi's barbarous purpose.

But thy credulity has ruin'd all,

Thy rash, thy wild—I know not what to name it——

Oh, it has prov'd the giddy hopes of man

To be delusion all, and sick'ning folly!

Sig. Ah, generous Tancred! ah, thy truth de-
stroy's me!

Yes, yes, 'tis I, 'tis I alone am false!

My hasty rage, join'd to my tame submission,

More than the most exalted filial duty

Could e'er demand, has dash'd our eup of fate

With bitterness unequal'd—But, alas !
 What are thy woes to mine ?—to mine ! just Heaven !
 Now is thy turn of vengeance—hate, renounce me !
 Oh, leave me to the fate I well deserve,
 To sink in hopeless misery !—at least,
 Try to forget the worthless Sigismunda !

Tan. Forget thee ! No ! Thou art my soul itself !
 I have no thought, no hope, no wish but thee !
 “ Even this repented injury, the fears,
 “ That rouse me all to madness, at the thought
 “ Of losing thee, the whole collected pains
 “ Of my full heart, serve but to make thee dearer.”
 Ah, how, forget thee !—Much must be forgot,
 Ere Tancred can forget his Sigismunda !

Sig. But you, my lord, must make that great effort.

Tan. Can Sigismunda make it ?

Sig. Ah, I know not
 With what success—But all that feeble woman
 And love-entangled reason can perform,
 I, to the utmost, will exert to do it.

“ *Tan.* Fear not—’Tis done !—If thou canst form
 the thought,

“ Success is sure—I am forgot already.

“ *Sig.* Ah, Tancred !—But, my lord, respect me
 more.

“ Think who I am—What can you now propose ?

“ *Tan.* To claim the plighted vows which Heaven
 has heard,

“ To vindicate the rights of holy love

“ By faith and honour bound, to which compar’d

“ These empty forms, which have ensnar’d thy hand,
“ Are impious guile, abuse, and profanation——
“ Nay, as a king, whose high prerogative
“ By this unlicens’d marriage is affronted,
“ To bid the laws themselves pronounce it void.

“ *Sig.* Honour, my lord, is much too proud to
catch

“ At every slender twig of nice distinctions.
“ These for th’ unfeeling vulgar may do well :
“ But those, whose souls are by the nicer rule
“ Of virtuous delicacy nobly sway’d,
“ Stand at another bar than that of laws.
“ Then cease to urge me—Since I am not born
“ To that exalted fate to be your queen——
“ Or, yet a dearer name—to be your wife !——
“ I am the wife of an illustrious lord
“ Of your own princely blood ; and what I am,
“ I will with proper dignity remain.
“ Retire, my royal lord.—There is no means
“ To cure the wounds this fatal day has given.
“ We meet no more !”

Tan. Oh, barbarous Sigismunda !

And canst thou talk thus steadily ; thus treat me
With such unpitying, unrelenting rigour ?
Poor is the love, that rather than give up
A little pride, a little formal pride,
The breath of vanity, can bear to see
The man, whose heart was once so dear to thine,
By many a tender vow so mix’d together,
A prey to anguish, fury and distraction !

Thou canst not surely make me such a wretch,
 Thou canst not, Sigismunda !—Yet relent,
 Oh, save us yet !—Rodolpho, with my guards,
 Waits in the garden—Let us seize the moments
 We ne'er may have again—With more than power
 I will assert thee mine, with fairest honour.
 The world shall even approve ; each honest bosom
 Swell'd with a kindred joy to see us happy.

Sig. The world approve ! what is the world to me ?
 The conscious mind is its own awful world.—
*And mine is fix'd—Distress me then no more ;
 Not all the heart can plead, (and it, alas,
 Pleads but too much)*

“ And yet, perhaps, if thou wert not a king,
 “ I know not, Tancred, what I might have done.
 “ Then, then, my conduct, sanctify'd by love,
 “ Could not be deem'd, by the severest judge,
 “ The mean effect of interest or ambition.
 “ But now not all my partial heart can plead,”
 Shall ever shake th' unalterable dictates
 That tyrannize my breast.

Tan. 'Tis well—No more—
 I yield me to my fate—Yes, yes, inhuman !
 Since thy barbarian heart is steel'd by pride,
 Shut up to love and pity, here behold me
 Cast on the ground, a vile and abject wretch !
 Lost to all cares, all dignities, all duties !
 Here will I grow, breathe out my faithful soul,
 Here at thy feet—Death, death alone shall part us !

Sig. Have you then vow'd to drive me to perdition !

What can I more?—Yes, Tancred! once again
I will forget the dignity my station
Commands me to sustain—for the last time
Will tell thee, that, I fear, no ties, no duty,
Can ever root thee from my hapless bosom.
Oh, leave me! fly me! were it but in pity!—
To see what once we tenderly have lov'd,
Cut off from every hope—cut off for ever!
Is pain thy generosity should spare me.
Then rise, my lord; and if you truly love me,
If you respect my honour, nay, my peace,
Retire! for though th' emotions of my heart
Can ne'er alarm my virtue; yet, alas!
They tear it so, they pierce it with such anguish—
Oh, 'tis too much!—I cannot bear the conflict!

Enter OSMOND.

Osm. Turn, tyrant, turn! and answer to my honour,
For this thy base insufferable outrage!

Tan. Insolent traitor! think not to escape
Thyself my vengeance! [*They fight, Osmond falls.*]

Sig. Help, here! Help!—Oh, heavens!

[*Throwing herself down by him.*]

Alas, my lord, what meant your headlong rage?
That faith, which I this day, upon the altar,
To you devoted, is unblemish'd, pure
As vestal truth; was resolutely yours,
Beyond the power of aught on earth to shake it.

Osm. Perfidious woman! die!—[*Shortening his sword, he plunges it into her breast.*] and to the grave
Attend a husband, yet but half aveng'd!

Tan. Oh, horror! horror! execrable villain!

Osm. And, tyrant! thou!—thou shalt not o'er my
tomb

Exult—'Tis well—'Tis great!—I die content!—[*Dies.*

Enter RODOLPHO and LAURA.

Tan. [*Throwing himself down by Sigismunda.*] Quick!
here! bring aid!—"All in Palermo bring,
"Whose skill can save her!"—Ah, that gentle bosom
Pours fast the streams of life.

Sig. All aid is vain,
I feel the powerful hand of death upon me—
But, oh! it sheds a sweetness through my fate,
That I am thine again; and without blame
May in my Tancred's arms resign my soul!

Tan. Oh, death is in that voice! so gently mild,
So sadly sweet, as mixes even with mine
The tears of hovering angels!—Mine again!—
And is it thus the cruel fates have join'd us?
Are these the horrid nuptials they prepare
For love like ours?—"Is virtue thus rewarded?
"Let not my impious rage accuse just Heaven!
"Thou, Tancred, thou, hast murdered Sigismunda!
"That furious man was but the tool of fate,
"I, I the cause!—But I will do thee justice
"On this deaf heart! that to thy tender wisdom
"Refus'd an ear"—Yes, death shall soon unite us.

Sig. Live, live, my Tancred!—Let my death suffice
 To expiate all that may have been amiss.
 May it appease the fates, avert their fury
 From thy propitious reign! “Meantime, of me
 “And of thy glory mindful, live, I charge thee,
 “To guard our friends, and make thy people happy—”

Enter SIFFREDI fixed in astonishment and grief.

My father!—Oh, how shall I lift my eyes
 To thee, my sinking father!

Sif. Awful Heaven!

I am chastis'd—My dearest child!—

Sig. Where am I?

A fearful darkness closes all around—

My friends! We needs must part—I must obey
 Th' impetuous call—Farewell, my Laura! “cherish
 “My poor afflicted father's age—Rodolpho,
 “Now is the time to watch th' unhappy king,
 “With all the care and tenderness of friendship.”—

Oh, my dear father, bow'd beneath the weight
 Of age and grief—the victim even of virtue,
 Receive my last adieu!—Where art thou, Tancred?
 Give me thy hand—But, ah,—it cannot save me
 From the dire king of terrors, whose cold power
 Creeps o'er my heart—Oh!

Tan. How these pangs distract me!

Oh, lift thy gracious eyes;—Thou leav'st me then!
 Thou leav'st me, Sigismunda!

Sig. “Yet a moment—

“I had, my Tancred, something more to say—

" Yes—but thy love and tenderness for me,
 " Sure makes it needless—Harbour no resentment
 " Against my father; venerate his zeal,
 " That acted from a principle of goodness,
 " From faithful love to thee—Live, and maintain
 " My innocence embalm'd, with holiest care
 " Preserve my spotless memory!" Oh,—I die—
 Eternal Mercy take my trembling soul!
 Oh, 'tis the only sting of death to part
 From those we love—from thee—farewell, my Tan-
 cred!
[Dies.

Tan. Thus then!

[*Flying to his sword, is held by Rodolpho.*]

Rod. Hold, hold, my lord!—Have you forgot
 Your Sigismunda's last request already?

Tan. Off! set me free! Think not to bind me down,
 With barbarous friendship, to the rack of life!
 What hand can shut the thousand thousand gates
 Which death still opens to the woes of mortals?—
 " I shall find means—No power in earth or heaven
 " Can force me to endure the hateful light,
 " Thus robb'd of all that lent it joy and sweetness!"
 Off, traitors, off! or my distracted soul
 Will burst indignant from this jail of nature,
 To where she beckons yonder—No, mild seraph,
 Point not to life—I cannot linger here,
 Cut off from thee, the miserable pity,
 The scorn of human kind!—A trampled king!
 " Who let his mean poor-hearted love, one moment,
 " To coward prudence stoop! who made it not

“ The first undoubting action of his reign,
“ To snatch thee to his throne, and there to shield thee,
“ Thy helpless bosom, from a ruffian’s fury !”——
Oh, shame ! Oh, agony ! Oh, the fell stings
Of late, of vain repentance !——Ha, my brain
Is all on fire ! a wild abyss of thought !
Th’ infernal world discloses ! See ! Behold him !
Lo ! with fierce smiles he shakes the bloody steel,
And mocks my feeble tears.—Hence, quickly, hence !
Spurn his vile carcass ! give it to the dogs !
Expose it to the winds and screaming ravens !
“ Or hurl it down that fiery steep to hell,
“ There with his soul to toss in flames for ever.”
Ah, impotence of rage !

Rod. *Preserve him, Heaven !*

Tan. What am I ? Where ?

Sad, silent, all ?—The forms of dumb despair,
Around some mournful tomb.—What do I see ?
This soft abode of innocence and love
Turn’d to the house of death ! a place of horror !——
Ah, that poor corse ! pale ! pale ! deform’d with murder !
Is that my Sigismunda ? [*Throws herself down by her.*

Sif. [*After a pathetic pause, looking on the scene before him.*
Have I liv’d

To these enfeebled years, by Heaven reserv’d
To be a dreadful monument of justice ?——
Rodolpho, raise the king, and bear him hence
From this distracting scene of blood and death.
“ Alas, I dare not give him my assistance ;
“ My care would only more inflame his rage.

" Behold the fatal work of my dark hand,
 " That by rude force the passions would command,
 " That ruthless thought to root them from the breast;
 " They may be rul'd, but will not be oppress."

Taught hence, ye parents, who from nature stray,
 And the great ties of social life betray;

Ne'er with your children act a tyrant's part:

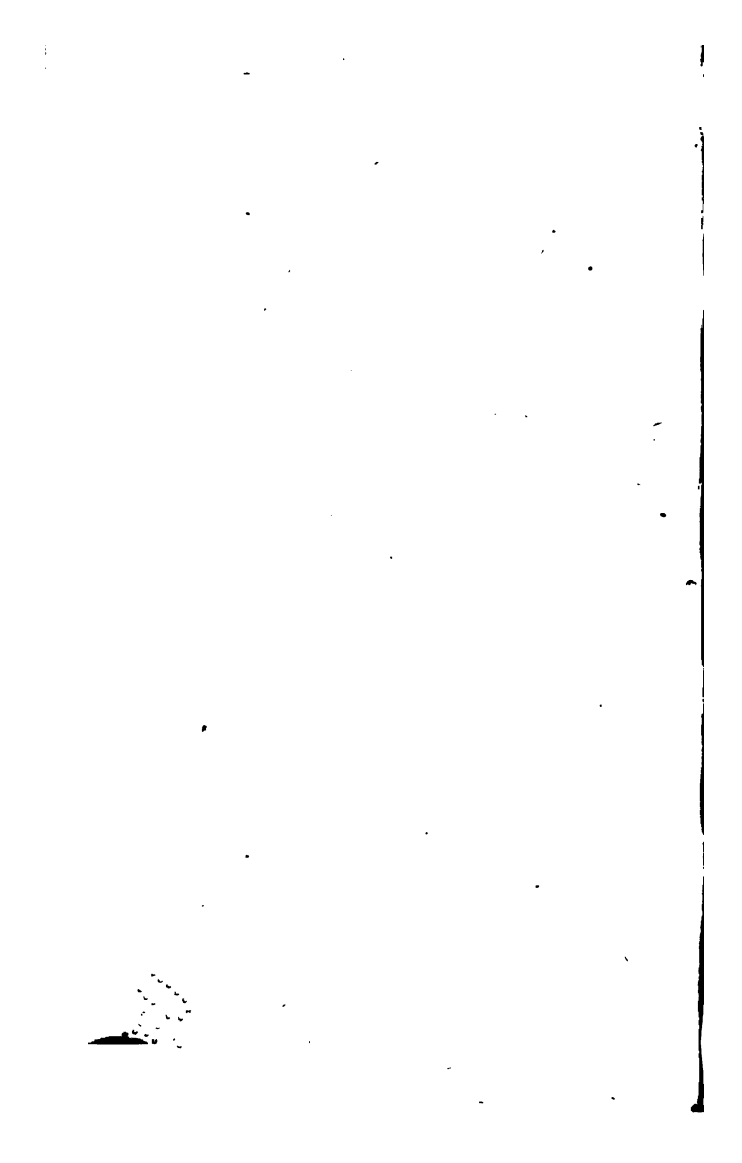
'Tis yours to guide, not violate the heart.

Ye vainly wise, who o'er mankind preside,

Behold my righteous woes, and drop your pride;

Keep virtue's simple path before your eyes,

Nor think from evil good can ever rise.



EPILOGUE.

*CRAMM'D to the throat with wholesome moral stuff,
Alas, poor audience! you have had enough.
Was ever hapless heroine of a play
In such a piteous plight as ours to-day?
Was ever woman so by love betray'd?
Match'd with two husbands, and yet—die a maid.
But bless me!—hold—what sounds are these I hear—
I see the Tragic Muse herself appear.*

[The back-scene opens, and discovers a romantic sylvan landscape ;. from which the Tragic Muse advances slowly to music, and speaks the following lines :

*Hence with your flippant epilogue, that tries
To wipe the virtuous tear from British eyes;
That dares my moral, tragic scene profane,
With strains—at best, unsuited, light and vain.
Hence from the pure unsully'd beams that play
In yon fair eyes where virtue shines—away!*

*Britons, to you from chaste Castalian groves,
Where dwell the tender, oft unhappy loves;
Where shades of heroes roam, each mighty name,
And court my aid to rise again to fame;*

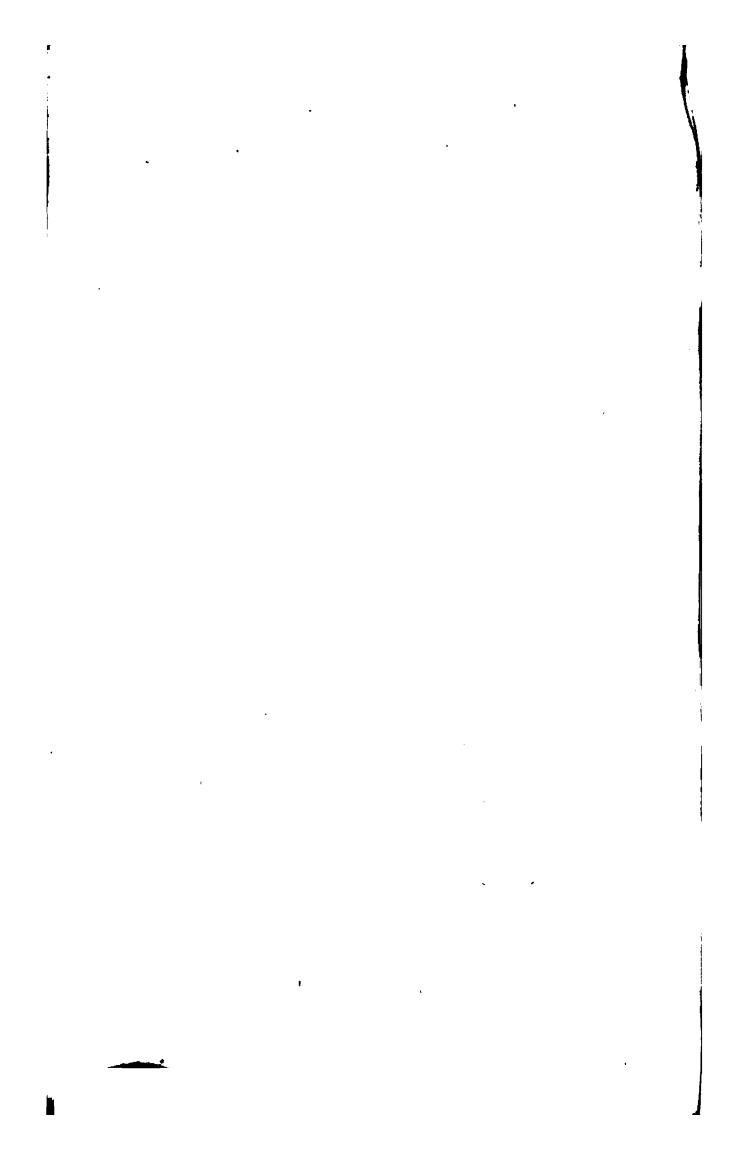
EPILOGUE.

*To you I come, to freedom's noblest seat,
And in Britannia fix my last retreat.*

*In Greece and Rome, I watch'd the public weal;
The purple tyrant trembled at my steel:
Nor did I less o'er private sorrows reign,
And mend the melting heart with softer pain.
On France and You then rose my brightning star,
With social ray—The arts are ne'er at war.
Oh, as your fire and genius strongly blaze,
As yours are generous freedom's bolder lays,
Let not the Gallic taste leave yours behind;
In decent manners and in life refin'd;
Banish the motly mode, to tag low verse,
The laughing ballad to the mournful herse.
When through five acts your hearts have learn'd to glow,
Touch'd with the sacred force of honest woe;
Oh, keep the dear impression on your breast,
Nor idly lose it for a wretched jest.*

THE END.





ZARA.

A

TRAGEDY.

BY AARON HILL, Esq.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRES - ROYAL,

DRURY-LANE AND COVENT-GARDEN.

REGULATED FROM THE PROMPT-BOOKS,

By Permission of the Managers.

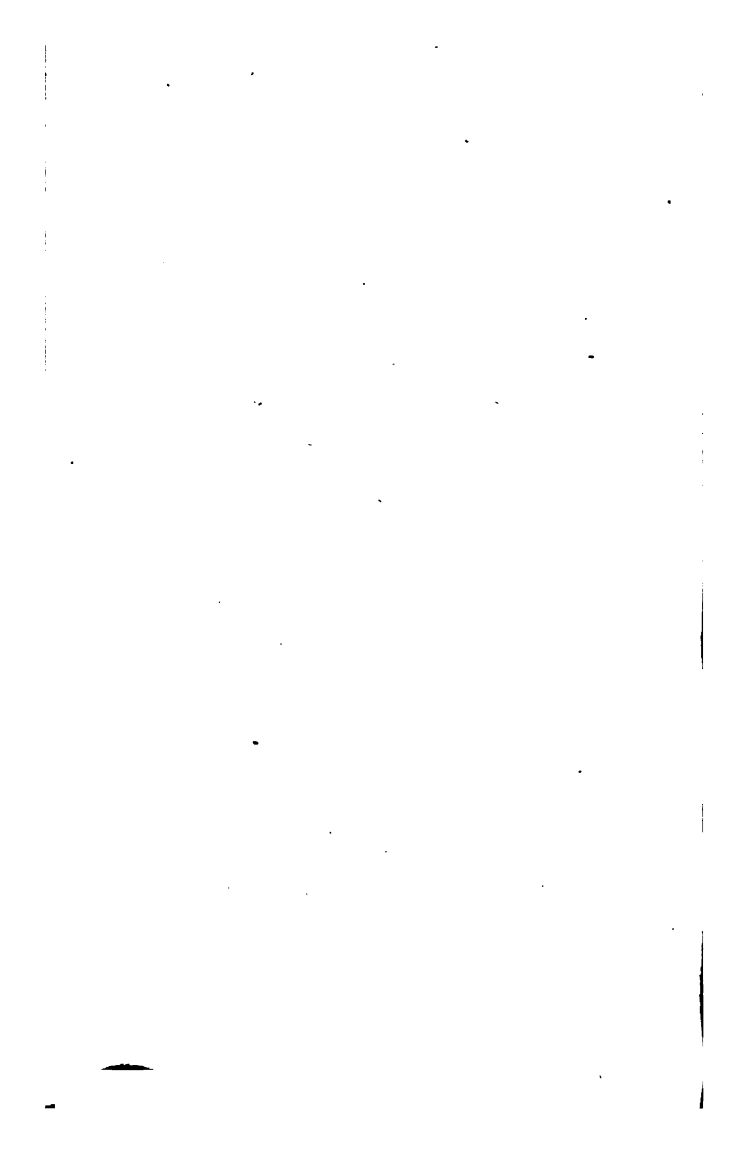
"The Lines distinguished by Inverted Commas, are omitted in the Representation."

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M DCC XCI.



TO HIS ROYAL HIGHNESS

THE

PRINCE.

SIR,

WRITERS, *who mean no Int'rest, but their Arts;*
Of undepending Minds, and stedfast Hearts,
Disclaiming Hopes will empty Forms neglect;
Nor need PERMISSION——to address Respect.

Frank, *as the manly Faith of ancient Time,*
Let Truth, for once, approach the Great, in Rhyme!
Nor Public Benefit, misguided, stray,
Because a Private Wisher points its Way.

If wond'ring, here, your Greatness condescends
To ask, What's HE, who thus, uncall'd, attends?
Smile, at a Suitor, who, in Courts, untrac'd,
Pleas'd, if o'erlook'd, thus owns his humble Taste.—

Vow'd an Unenvier of the busy Great;
Too plain for Flatt'ry; and, too calm for Hate:
Hid to be Happy; who surveys, unknown,
The pow'rless Cottage, and the peaceless Throne;
A silent Subject to His own Controul;
Of active passions, but unyielding Soul;

A ij

Engross'd *by NO Pursuits*, amus'd *by All*;
But, deaf *as Adders*, to *Ambition's Call* :
Too Free, for *Pow'r*, (or *Prejudice*) to *WIN*,
And, safely lodging *Liberty* *WITHIN*.

Pardon, Great Prince! *th' unfashionable strain*,
That shuns to dedicate ; *nor seeks to gain* :
That (self-resigning) *knows no narrow View* ;
And but for Public Blessings, courts ev'n *YOU!*

Late a bold *Tracer of your measur'd Mind*,
(*While, by the mournful SCENE, to Grief inclin'd,*)
I saw your Eloquence of Eyes confess
Soft Sense of BELVIDERA's deep Distress,
Prophetic thence, fore-deem'd the rising Years ;
And hail'd a HAPPY NATION in YOUR Tears!

Oh!--nobly touch'd!--th' inspiring Pleasure choose,
Snatch from the sable Wave, the sinking MUSE!
Charming, be charm'd! the Stage's Anguish heal :
And teach a languid People how to feel.

Then *her full Soul shall TRAGIC Pow'r impart*,
And reach Three Kingdoms in their Prince's Heart!
Lightness, disclaim'd, shall blush itself away :
And reas'ning SENSE resume forgotten Sway.
Love, Courage, Loyalty, Taste, Honour, Truth,
Flash'd from the Scene, re-charm our list'ning Youth :
And, Virtues (by YOUR Influence form'd) sustain
The future Glories of their Founder's Reign.

*Nor let due Care of a protected Stage,
Misjudg'd Amusement, but spare Hours engage ;
Strong, serious TRUTHS, the manly Muse displays ;
And leads charm'd Reason through those flow'ry
Ways.*

*While HISTORY's cold Care but Facts inrolls,
The MUSE (persuasive) saves the pictur'd Souls !
Beyond all Egypt's GUMS, embalms Mankind :
And stamps the living Features of the Mind.*

*Time can eject the Sons of Pow'r, from Fame ;
And He, who gains a World, may LOSE his Name.
But cherish'd Arts insure immortal Breath :
And bid their prop'd Defenders tread on Death !*

*Look back, lov'd Prince ! on Age's sunk in shade !
And feel, what DARKNESS absent Genius made !
Think on the dead Fore-fillers of your Place !
Think on the stern First-founders of your Race !
And, where lost Story sleeps in silent Night ;
Charge to their Want of Taste, their Want of LIGHT.*

*When, in your rising Grove, (no Converse nigh)
BLACK EDWARD's awful Bust demands your Eye,
Think, from what Cause blind Chronicles DEFAME
The gross-told Tow'rings of that dreadful Name !
Search him, thro' FANCY ; And suppose him shown
By the long Glories to the MUSES known :
Shining, disclos'd :—o'ertrampling Death's Controul !
And, opening, backward, All his Depth of Soul !*

*Then—breathe a conscious Sigh to mourn his Fate,
Who form'd no Writers, like his Spirit Great !
To limn his living Thoughts—past Fame renew :
And build HIM Honours they reserve for You !*

I am,

With profound Respect,

SIR,

Your ROYAL HIGHNESS's

Most humble,

And obedient Servant,

A. HILL.

AARON HILL.

He who can survey the recorded life of this gentleman, without exultation, must be dead to virtue ; He, who is not proud of the lustre it reflects upon his species, feels nothing of the enthusiasm that warms into kindred excellence.

AARON HILL was a native of the Capital, and born in Beaufort-Buildings, Strand, on the 10th of February, 1684-5. Paternally, his exemplar was a bad one, for his father GEORGE HILL, Esq. was lavish and indiscreet, and the legal right to a property of 2000*l.* a year, which would have devolved upon him, his Father so involved as to render it of no value to the family.

THE young gentleman, however *thus* unfortunate, was well gifted other ways ; he was adorned by much mental power, and promptitude that carried that power to the best account—his mind was formed for enterprize, inventive and indefatigable. He had scarcely gone through Westminster, and completed his 14th year, when he sought

after fortune in other climes, and surely with a sufficient disregard of distance, for he undertook a voyage to *Constantinople*.—His expected advancement was baffled by a mean woman as far as was pecuniary, but the advancement in the best knowledge, the *savoir vivre*, he who mix'd so much with variety of character, and possess'd the mind of AARON HILL, could not but find a commodity readily convertible into wealth.

FEW men have been more multifarious in pursuit than this—For HE made *plays*, who could also make *Beech oil*. Among his struggles after pre-eminence he sought to rival the Russians in *Petashies*—and the Highlander first ventured down the Spey upon *Floats* at the suggestion and example of HILL.—He cut down forests of timber that JOHNSON could never have discovered, and shewed the English builder, that Scottish timber was perfectly applicable to ship-building.—He was occupied at once by the cultivation of the art of acting, and that of planting, and his imagination vibrated between South Carolina and the Theatre in the Haymarket.

HILL was one of those with whom POPE commenced a war, that dishonoured his great talents

—For something, or for nothing, he made HILL dive, and arise without spot from the mud of dullness; and the retort of HILL should be remembered as the keenest characteristic of POPE's literary life.

Tuneful ALEXIS, on the Thames' fair side,
The ladies' *play-thing*, and the muses' pride,
With merit popular, with wit polite,
Easy though vain, and elegant though light,
Desiring and *deserving* others praise,
Poorly accepts a fame he ne'er repays;
Unborn to cherish, SNEAKINGLY APPROVES,
And wants the soul to *spread* the worth he *loves*.

I HAVE little more to add to this mention, but that in marriage he was happy, and he deserved his happiness;—he was studious, and his labour was not in vain; he attracted the love of man, and it is imagined lived strictly that life which he believed most acceptable to God.—Active usefulness attended him till he died, this happened in 1750. The shock of the great earthquake immediately preceded a shock to him fatal.

HE died in his 65th year, and was interred in the same grave with his lady in Westminster Abbey. His dramatic pieces are the following :

<i>Elfrid</i>	—	—	1710	<i>Rinaldo</i>	—	—	1711
<i>Walking Statue</i>	—		1710	<i>Fatal Vision</i>	—		1716
<i>Trick upon Trick</i>	—			<i>Henry V.</i>	—		1723

<i>Atbelwold</i>	—	1732	<i>Merlin in Love</i>	—	1759
<i>Zara</i>	—	1735	<i>Muses in Mourning</i>		1759
<i>Alzira</i>	—	1736	<i>Snake in the Grass</i>	—	1759
<i>Merope</i>	—	1749	<i>Saul</i>	—	
<i>Roman Revenge</i>	—	1753	<i>Daranes</i>	—	
<i>Insolvent</i>	—	1758	<i>Fatal Extravagance.</i>		

ZARA.

IF it were merely from the ground-work of the Piece that this Play should be estimated, much of our Admiration would abate—Religious Differences are now neither felt with that Horror, nor do they, thank Heaven, produce now the Miseries that Bigotry and Ignorance formerly originated.

BUT ZARA has other and strong Claims—from the natural delineation of the Passions. M. VOLTAIRE was the Original Author, but even his Play is an *English* one, and the French Stage grew animated by the Transfusion of the manly Energy of Shakspeare. The present is obviously an elegant liberal Translation from the ZAIRE of Voltaire, with some trivial Alterations of Names and Sentiments.

In this Piece Mrs. CIBBER made her Theatrical début in the Character of Zara.

PREFACE

TO THE READER.

THE Beauties of *Nature* will be Beauties *everlastingly*.— If they are, sometimes, *eclipsed* by a Cloud of ill Accidents, they *disperse* the dark *Screen* ; and, again, become amiable.

BUT, unwilling to suppose, we are, *now*, under Influence of such a *Cloud*, with regard to *Dramatical Taste*, I thought it more decent, (and *juster*) to charge its Degeneracy to the *STAGE*, than to the *Genius* of the Nation.

ACCOUNTING in this Manner for the *Defect*, I have often taken Pleasure, (when turning my Search towards a *Remedy*) to consider it, as no improbable Hope, that YOUNG *Actors* and *Actresses*, beginning, *unseduced* by AFFECTED EXAMPLES, might go some Length, towards what has been said of a celebrated Writer—

“ *Who reach'd Perfection, in his first Essay.*”

IT required, methought, but the Assistance of a lively *Imagination*, joined to an easy, and natural *Power* ; with a resolute *Habitude*, to BE, for an Hour or two, the very Persons they would *seem*.—Such a *Foundation* for accomplished Acting, lies so open, and so clearly in *Nature*, that they, who find it at all, *must* discover it at *first* : Because, when Men are once got *out of the Road*, they, who travel the *farthest*, have but most Length of Way to ride *back* again.

YET, the Interested in Playhouses were so positive in the contrary Sentiment, that they submitted to reverence, as a *Maxim*, this extraordinary Concession, "That *Actors must be twenty Years such, before they can expect to be Masters of the Air, and Tread of the Stage.*"

Now, there is but *one View*, in Nature, wherein I was willing to admit of this Argument: I was forced to *confess*, I had seen some *particular Stage Airs*, and Stage Treads, which a Man of good Sense *might*, indeed, waste a long Life, in endeavouring to imitate, and, *at last, lose his Labour!*

HOWEVER, since an Opinion, in Opposition to these Gentlemen's, wanted Weight to make That believed *possible*, which had not, yet, been reduced into *Practice*, I took a sudden Resolution, actually to try, Who *was in the Right*, by attempting the EXPERIMENT.—This, I know, was a design, which, succeeding, would not fail to give Pleasure to the *Public*; and, which, *miscarrying*, could produce no worse Consequence, than *my particular Mortification*.

I imagined it reasonable to found a Trial, of this Nature, rather on a *New Play*, than an *Old* one: And, as it ought to be a Play of unquestionable *Merit*, it must have been Presumption, and Vanity, to have cast a Thought toward any Thing, *of my own*—Upon the Whole, that I might keep out of the Reach either of Prejudice, or Partiality, a *Foreign Production* seemed the properest Choice; and the ZAIRE, of *Monsieur de Voltaire*, offered me every thing that Nature could do, on the Part of the *Poet*: But, I had still something to *wish*, with regard to that *other Part* of her Influence, which depended on the *Player*.

I had (of late) among the rest of the Town, been deprived of all rational Pleasure from the Theatre, by a monstrous and un-

moving *Affectation* : Which, choaking up the Avenues to *Passion*, had made *Tragedy* FORBIDDING, and HORRIBLE !

I was despairing to see a *Correction* of this Folly ; when I found myself unexpectedly re-animated, by the War which the PROMPTER has proclaimed, and is now weekly waging against the *Ranters* and *Whiners* of the Theatre ; after having undertaken to reduce the *Actor's lost Art*, into PRINCIPLES, with Design, by reconciling them to the touching and spirited *Medium*, to reform those *wild Copies* of Life, into some *Resemblance* at least of their *Originals*.

THUS, confirmed in my Sentiments, I ventured on the *Cast* of two *Capital Characters*, into Hands, *not disabled*, by Custom and obstinate Prejudice, from pursuing the *Plain Traſt* of NATURE.

IT was easy to induce OSMAN, (as he is a Relation of my own, and *but too fond* of the Amusement,) to make Trial *how far* his Delight in an Art I shall never allow him to *practiſe*, might enable him to supply *one Part* of the Proof, that, to *imitate Nature*, we must proceed *upon Natural Principles*.

AT the same Time, it happened, that Mrs. CIBBER was fortunately inclinable to exert her inimitable Talents, in *additional Aid* of my Purpose, with View to *continue* the *Practiſe* of a Profession, for which her *Person*, her *Voice*, the unaffected *Sensibility* of her *Heart*, (and her *Face*, so finely disposed for *assuming* and *expressing* the PASSIONS) have so naturally qualified her.

AND, to give this bold *Novelty of Design* all its necessary Furtherance, Mr. FLEETWOOD, who professes the most generous Inclinations for *Improvement* of his troublesome Province, very willingly concurred in whatever could, on *his Part*, be of Use to the *Experiment*.

BEHOLD, in this little *Detail*, from *what Motive* I have taken upon me to throw one of the finest of *French Plays* upon the Public.—If my Expectations are not strangely *deceived*, it will be found, by the *Event*, whether our *Taste* for true Tragedy is *declined*; or the true *Art* of *acting* it *forgotten*.

FROM the *First* I can have nothing to conclude, but that my Judgment has been *weak*, and *mistaken*.

BUT, if the *Last* proves the Case, I shall flatter myself, that those Persons of *Quality*, from whose *imaginary Want of Discernment* some People have not *blushed* to *derive* their *dull Qualities*, will, in Right of their *insulted Understanding*, *exact*, for the future, a warm and toilsome Exertion, of the *Strong* and the *Natural*, though at the *COST* of the *Lazy* and *Affected*.

THIS would awaken, at once, the *Reflection* of many, who have it in their *POWER* to be moving, and natural *Actors*; and, by effectually *convincing* them, that their present Opinion is *wrong*, bring 'em over (for their own, and the Public Advantage) to embrace and succeed by a *New* one.

SUCH a Step towards *reforming* the Theatre, would draw on, (as a Consequence) many of its *nobler* Improvements—For, where *Emotions* are keenest, the *Delight* becomes greatest; and to whatever *most charms*, we most closely *adhere*, and encourage it *most actively*.

IF, in translating this excellent Tragedy, I have regarded in some Places the *Soul*, and in others the *Letter* of the Original, *Monsieur de Voltaire*, who has made himself a very capable *Judge* both of our *Language* and *Customs*, will indulge me that Latitude; except he should, in observing some *Alterations* I have made, in his Names and his *Diſtion*, forget that their *Motives* are to be found in the Turn of our National *Difference*.

After what I have said of the Playhouses, it would be Injustice not to *declare*, that I exclude from the Censure of speaking or acting *unnaturally*, any one of the Persons who have been cast into ZARA.—And in particular, I must say *This* of TWO of them; that *Mr. MILWARD*, who is already a very *excellent*, and hourly rising to be an *accomplished* Actor, has a *Voice* that both comprehends, and expresses, *the utmost Compass of HARMONY*.—And *Mr. CIBBER* discerningly pursued through the numberless *Extent* of his *Walks*, is an Actor of as *unlimited a Compass of GENIUS*, as ever I saw on the Stage; and is *barely* received, as he *deserves*, when the Town is *most favourable*.

PROLOGUE.

*THE French, howe'er mercurial they may seem,
Extinguish half their fire, by critic phlegm:
While English Writers Nature's Freedom claim,
And warm their scenes with an ungovern'd flame:
'Tis strange that Nature never should inspire
A Racine's judgment with a Shakspeare's fire!*

*Howe'er to-night—(to promise much we're loth)
But—you've a chance, to have a taste of both.
From English plays, 'Zara's French author fir'd,
Confess'd his muse beyond herself, inspir'd;
From rack'd Othello's rage he rais'd his style,
And snatch'd the brand that lights this tragic pile:
Zara's success his utmost hopes outflew,
And a twice twentieth weeping audience drew.*

*As for our English friend, he leaves to you,
Whate'er may seem to his performance due;
No views of gain his hopes or fears engage,
He gives a child of leisure to the stage;
Willing to try, if yet, forsaken Nature,
Can charm, with any one remember'd feature.*

*Thus far, the author speaks—but now, the player,
With trembling Heart, prefers his humble prayer.
To-night, the greatest venture of my life,
Is lost or sav'd, as YOU receive—a wife:*

*If time, you think, may ripen her to merit,
With gentle smiles, support her wav'ring spirit.
Zara in France, at once an actress rais'd,
Warm'd into skill, by being kindly prais'd :
O ! could such wonders here from favour flow,
How would our Zara's heart with transport glow !
But she, alas ! by juster fears oppress'd,
Begs but your bare endurance, at the best,
Her unskill'd tongue would simple Nature speak,
Nor dares her bounds, for false applauses break.
Amidst a thousand faults, her best pretence
To please—is unpresuming innocence.
When a chaste heart's distress your grief demands,
One silent tear outweighs a thousand hands,
If she conveys the pleasing passions RIGHT,
Guard and support her, this decisive night ;
If she MISTAKES—or, finds her strength too small,
Let interposing pity—break her fall.
In you it rests, to save her, or destroy,
If she draws tears from You, I weep—for JOY.*



Dramatis Personae.*

DRURY-LANE.

Men.

OSMAN, Sultan of Jerusalem,	- - -	Mr. Kemble.
LUSIGNAN, last of the blood of the Chris-		
tian kings of Jerusalem,	- - - -	Mr. Bensley.
NERESTAN,	- - -	Mr. Barrymore.
CHATILLON, } French officers,	- - -	Mr. Aickin.
ORASMIN, Minister to the Sultan,	- - -	Mr. Packer.
MELIDOR, an officer of the Seraglio,	- - -	Mr. Phillimore.

Women.

ZARA,	} Slaves to the Sultan,	- -	Miss Kemble.
SELIMA,		- -	Mrs. Ward.

COVENT-GARDEN.

Men.

OSMAN, Sultan of Jerusalem,	- - -	Mr. Wroughton.
LUSIGNAN, last of the blood of the Chris-		
tian kings of Jerusalem,	- - - -	Mr. Henderson.
NERESTAN,	- - -	Mr. Davies.
CHATILLON, } French officers,	- - -	Mr. Hull.
ORASMIN, Minister to the Sultan,	- - -	Mr. Fearon.
MELIDOR, an officer of the Seraglio,	- - -	Mr. Thompson.

Women.

ZARA,	} Slaves to the Sultan,	- -	Mrs. Pope.
SELIMA,		- -	Mrs. Inchbald.

* These were the *Dramatis Personae* the last time of performing this Piece.



ZARA.

ACT I. SCENE I.

ZARA and SELIMA.

Selima.

It moves my wonder, young and beauteous Zara,
Whence these new sentiments inspire your heart !
Your peace of mind increases with your charms ;
Tears now no longer shade your eyes soft lustre :
You meditate no more those happy climes
To which Nerestan will return to guide you.
You talk no more of that gay nation now,
Where men adore their wives, and woman's power
Draws rev'rence from a polish'd people's softness :
Their husbands' equals, and their lovers' queens !
Free without scandal ; wise without restraint ;
" Their virtue due to nature, not to fear."
Why have you ceas'd to wish this happy change ?
A barr'd seraglio !—sad, unsocial life !
Scorn'd, and a slave ! All this has lost its terror ;
And Syria rivals, now, the banks of Seine !
Zar. Joys which we do not know, we do not wish.

Of late I dream'd in my dream's sacred wall :
 Of a throne my master within this palace,
 Commanding earth, from time, the power to please.
 I dream'd he sat in the summer world,
 The sun his property, his will my law ;
 Unknown to all but him, his power, his time ;
 To live his subject is my only hope,
 All else, an empty dream.—

Sol. Have you forgot
 Almost Neostan then? whose gen'rous friendship
 So nobly vow'd redemption from your chains!
 How oft have you admir'd his dauntless soul!
 Once, his conqueror, by his courage charm'd,
 On his word of faith, and on his word releas'd him:
 He turn'd in time—we yet expect him.
 No other noble journey other motive,
 To purchase our ransom.—And is this,
 Your warm hope, become an idle dream?
 Since after two long years he not returns,
 His promise stretch'd beyond his power.
 A stranger and a slave, unknown, like him,
 Promising much, means little;—talks and vows,
 Delighted with a prospect of escape:—
 He promis'd to redeem ten Christians more,
 And free us all from slavery!—I own
 I once admir'd the unprofitable zeal,
 But now it charms no longer.—

Sol. What if yet,
 He faithful should return, and hold his vow;
 Would you not, then—

Zar. No matter—Time is past,
And every thing is chang'd——

Sel. But, whence comes this?

Zar. Go—'twere too much to tell thee Zara's fate:
The sultan's secrets, all, are sacred here:
But my fond heart delights to mix with thine.
Some three months past, when thou, and other slaves,
Were forc'd to quit fair Jordan's flow'ry bank;
Heav'n, to cut short the anguish of my days,
Rais'd me to comfort by a pow'rful hand:
This mighty Osman!——

Sel. What of him?

Zar. This sultan,
This conqueror of the Christians, loves——

60

Sel. Whom?

Zar. Zara!——

Thou blushest, and I guess thy thoughts accuse me:
But, know me better——'twas unjust suspicion.
All emperor as he is, I cannot stoop
To honours, that bring shame and baseness with 'em:
Reason and pride, those props of modesty,
Sustain my guarded heart, and strengthen virtue;
“ Rather than sink to infamy, let chains
“ Embrace me with a joy, such love denies:”
No——I shall now astonish thee;——his greatness
Submits to own a pure and honest flame.
Among the shining crowds, which live to please him,
His whole regard is fix'd on me alone:
He offers marriage; and its rites now wait
To crown me empress of this eastern world.

Sel. Your virtue and your charms deserve it all :
My heart is not surpris'd, but struck to hear it.
If to be empress can complete your happiness, 80
I rank myself, with joy, among your slaves.

Zar. Be still my equal—and enjoy my blessings ;
For, thou partaking, they will bless me more.

Sel. Alas ! but Heaven ! will it permit this marriage ?

Will not this grandeur, falsely call'd a bliss,
Plant bitterness, and root it in your heart ?
Have you forgot you are of Christian blood ?

Zar. Ah me ! What hast thou said, why wouldst thou thus

Recall my wav'ring thoughts ? How know I, what,
Or whence I am ? Heaven kept it hid in darkness,
Conceal'd me from myself, and from my blood.

Sel. Nerestan, who was born a Christian, here,
Asserts, that you, like him, had Christian parents ;
Besides—that cross, which, from your infant years
Has been preserv'd, was found upon your bosom,
As if design'd by Heaven, a pledge of faith
Due to the God you purpose to forsake !

Zar. Can my fond heart, on such a feeble proof,
Embrace a faith, abhorr'd by him I love ?
I see too plainly custom forms us all ; 100
Our thoughts, our morals, our most fix'd belief,
Are consequences of our place of birth :
Born beyond Ganges, I had been a Pagan,
In France a Christian, I am here a Saracen :
'Tis but instruction, all ! Our parents' hand

Writes on our heart the first faint characters,
 Which time, re-tracing, deepens into strength,
 That nothing can efface, but death or Heaven!—
 Thou wer't not made a pris'ner in this place,
 'Till after reason, borrowing force from years,
 Had lent its lustre to enlighten faith :—
 For me, who in my cradle was their slave,
 Thy Christian doctrines were too lately taught me :
 Yet, far from having lost the rev'rence due,
 This cross, as often as it meets my eye,
 Strikes thro' my heart a kind of awful fear !
 I honour, from my soul, the Christian laws,
 Those laws, which, softening nature by humanity,
 Melt nations into brotherhood ;—no doubt
 Christians are happy ; and 'tis just to love them. 120

Sel. Why have you, then, declar'd yourself their foe?
 Why will you join your hand with this proud Osman's?
 Who owes his triumph to the Christians' ruin !

Zar. Ah!—who could slight the offer of his heart ?
 Nay ;—for I mean to tell thee all my weakness ;
 Perhaps I had, ere now, profess'd thy faith,
 But Osman lov'd me—and I've lost it all :—
 I think on none but Osman—my pleas'd heart,
 Fill'd with the blessing, to be lov'd by him,
 Wants room for other happiness. “ Place thou
 “ Before thy eyes, his merit and his fame,
 “ His youth, yet blooming but in manhood's dawn ;
 “ How many conquer'd kings have swell'd his pow'r!
 “ Think, too, how lovely! how his brow becomes
 “ This wreath of early glories!”—Oh, my friend !

I talk not of a sceptre, which he gives me :
 No—to be charm'd with that were thanks too humble !
 Offensive tribute, and too poor for love !
 'Twas Osman won my heart, not Osman's crown :
 I love not in him aught besides himself. 140
 Thou think'st, perhaps, that these are starts of passion:
 But, had the will of Heav'n less bent to bless him,
 Doom'd Osman to my chains, and me to fill
 The throne that Osman sits on—ruin and wretchedness
 Catch and consume my wishes, but I would—
 To raise me to myself, descend to him.

“ *Sel.* Hark ! the wish'd music sounds—'Tis he—
 he comes— [Exit *Selima*.

“ *Zar.* My heart prevented him, and found him
 near :

“ Absent two whole long days, the slow-pac'd hour
 “ At last is come, and gives him to my wishes !”
 [A grand march.

Enter OSMAN, reading a paper, which he re-delivers to
ORASMIN ; with Attendants.

Osm. Wait my return—or, should there be a cause
 That may require my presence, do not fear
 To enter ; ever mindful, that my own

[Exit *Oras. &c.*

Follows my people's happiness.—At length,
 Cares have releas'd my heart—to love and Zara.

Zar. 'Twas not in cruel absence, to deprive me
 Of your imperial image—every where
 You reign triumphant : memory supplies

Reflexion with your power ; and you, like Heaven,
Are always present—and are always gracious. 160

Osm. The Sultans, my great ancestors, bequeath'd
Their empire to me, but their taste they gave not ;
Their laws, their lives, their loves, delight not me :
I know our prophet smiles on am'rous wishes,
And opens a wide field to vast desire ;
I know, that at my will I might possess ;
That, wasting tenderness in wild profusion,
I might look down to my surrounded feet,
And bless contending beauties. I might speak,
Serenely slothful, from within my palace,
And bid my pleasure be my people's law.
But, sweet as softness is, its end is cruel ;
I can look round, and count a hundred kings,
Unconquer'd by themselves, and slaves to others :
Hence was Jerusalem to Christians lost ;
“ But Heaven, to blast that unbelieving race,
“ Taught me to be a king, by thinking like one.”
Hence from the distant Euxine to the Nile,
The trumpet's voice has wak'd the world to war ;
Yet, amidst arms and death, thy power has reach'd
me ; 180

For thou disdain'st, like me, a languid love ;
Glory and Zara join—and charm together.

Zar. I hear at once, with blushes and with joy,
This passion, so unlike your country's customs.

Osm. Passion, like mine, disdains my country's cus-
toms ;
The jealousy, the faintness, the distrust,

The proud, superior coldness of the east.
 I know to love you, Zara, with esteem;
 To trust your virtue, and to court your soul.
 Nobly confiding, I unveil my heart,
 And dare inform you, that, 'tis all your own:
 My joys must all be yours; only my cares
 Shall lie conceal'd within—and reach not Zara.

Zar. Oblig'd by this excess of tenderness,
 How low, how wretched was the lot of Zara!
 Too poor withaught, but thanks, to pay such blessings!

Osm. Not so—I love—and would be lov'd again;
 Let me confess it, I possess a soul,
 That what it wishes, wishes ardently.
 I should believe you hated, had you power 200
 To love with moderation: 'tis my aim,
 In every thing, to reach supreme perfection.
 If, with an equal flame, I touch your heart,
 Marriage attends your smile—But know, 'twill make
 Me wretched, if it makes not Zara happy.

Zar. Ah, sir! if such a heart as gen'rous Osman's
 Can, from my will, submit to take its bliss,
 What mortal ever was decreed so happy!
 Pardon the pride, with which I own my joy;
 Thus wholly to possess the man I love!
 To know, and to confess his will my fate!
 To be the happy work of his dear hands!
 To be—

Enter ORASMIN.

Osm. Already interrupted! What?
 Who?—Whence?

Oras. This moment, sir, there is arriv'd
That Christian slave, who, licens'd on his faith,
Went hence to France—and, now return'd, prays au-
dience.

Zar. [*Aside.*] Oh, Heaven! 199

Osm. Admit him—What?—Why comes he not?

Oras. He waits without. No Christian dares ap-
proach

This place, long sacred to the Sultan's privacies.

Osm. Go—bring him with thee—monarchs, like the
sun,

Shine but in vain, unwarming, if unseen;
With forms and rev'rence, let the great approach us;
Not the unhappy;—every place alike,
Gives the distress'd a privilege to enter.—[*Exit Oras.*
I think with horror on these dreadful maxims,
Which harden kings insensibly to tyrants.

Re-enter ORASMIN with NERESTAN.

Ner. Imperial Sultan! honour'd, ev'n by foes!
See me return'd, regardful of my vow,
And punctual to discharge a Christian's duty.
I bring the ransom of the captive Zara,
Fair Selima, the partner of her fortune,
And of ten Christian captives, pris'ners here.
You promis'd, Sultan, if I should return,
To grant their rated liberty:—Behold,
I am return'd, and they are yours no more.
I would have stretch'd my purpose to myself,
But fortune has deny'd it;—my poor all

Suffic'd no further, and a noble poverty
Is now my whole possession.—I redeem
The promis'd Christians; for I taught 'em hope:
But, for myself, I come again your slave,
To wait the fuller hand of future charity.

Osm. Christian! I must confess thy courage charms
me?

But let thy pride be taught, it treads too high,
When it presumes to climb above my mercy.
Go ransomless thyself, and carry back
Their unaccepted ransoms, join'd with gifts,
Fit to reward thy purpose; instead of ten,
Demand a hundred Christians; they are thine:
Take 'em, and bid 'em teach their haughty country,
They left some virtue among Saracens.—
Be Lusignan alone excepted—He
Who boasts the blood of kings, and dares lay claim
To my Jerusalem—that claim, his guilt!
“Such is the law of states; had I been vanquish'd,
“Thus had he said of me.” I mourn his lot,
Who must in fetters, lost to day-light, pine, 260
And sigh away old age in grief and pain.
For Zara—but to name her as a captive,
Were to dishonour language;—she's a prize
Above thy purchase:—all the Christian realms,
With all their kings to guide 'em, would unite
In vain, to force her from me—Go, retire—
Ner. For Zara's ransom, with her own consent,
I had your royal word. For Lusignan—
Unhappy, poor, old man—

Osm. Was I not heard ?
 Have I not told thee, Christian, all my will ?
 What if I prais'd thee !—This presumptuous virtue,
 Compelling my esteem, provokes my pride ;
 Be gone—and when to-morrow's sun shall rise
 On my dominions, be not found—too near me.

[*Exit Nerestan.*]

Zar. [*Aside.*] Assist him, Heaven !

Osm. Zara, retire a moment—
 Assume, throughout my palace, sovereign empire,
 While I give orders to prepare the pomp
 That waits to crown thee mistress of my throne. 280

[*Leads her out, and returns.*]

Orasmin ! didst thou mark th' imperious slave ?
 What could he mean ?—he sigh'd—and, as he went,
 Turn'd and look'd back at Zara !—didst thou mark it ?

Oras. Alas ! my sovereign master ! let not jealousy
 Strike high enough to reach your noble heart.

Osm. Jealousy, said'st thou ? I disdain it :—No !
 Distrust is poor ; and a misplac'd suspicion
 Invites and justifies the falsehood fear'd.—
 Yet, as I love with warmth—so, I could hate !
 But Zara is above disguise and art :—
 “ My love is stronger, nobler, than my power.”
 Jealous !—I was not jealous !—If I was,
 I am not—no—my heart—but, let us drown
 Remembrance of the word, and of the image :
 My heart is fill'd with a diviner flame.—
 Go, and prepare for the approaching nuptials.
 “ Zara to careful empire joins delight.”

I must allot one hour to thoughts of state,
Then, all the smiling day is love and Zara's.

[Exit Orasmin.

Monarchs, by forms of pompous misery press'd, go
In proud, unsocial misery, unblest'd,
Wou'd, but for love's soft influence, curse their
throne,
And, among crowded millions, live alone. [Exit.

ACT II. SCENE I.

NERESTAN, CHATILLON.

Chatillon.

MATCHLESS Nerestan! generous and great!
You, who have broke the chains of hopeless slaves!
"You, Christian saviour! by a Saviour sent!"
Appear, be known, enjoy your due delight;
The grateful weepers wait to clasp your knees,
They throng to kiss the happy hand that sav'd 'em:
Indulge the kind impatience of their eyes,
And, at their head, command their hearts for ever.

Ner. Illustrious Chatillon! this praise o'erwhelms
me;

What have I done beyond a Christian's duty;
Beyond what you would, in my place, have done?

Chat. True—it is every honest Christian's duty;
Nay, 'tis the blessing of such minds as ours,

For others' good to sacrifice our own.—
 Yet, happy they, to whom Heav'n grants the power,
 To execute, like you, that duty's call !
 For us—the relics of abandon'd war,
 Forgot in France, and, in Jerusalem,
 Left to grow old in fetters,—Osman's father
 Consign'd us to the gloom of a damp dungeon, 20
 Where, but for you, we must have groan'd out life,
 And native France have bless'd our eyes no more.

Ner. The will of gracious Heav'n, that soften'd
 Osman,

Inspir'd me for your sakes :—But, with our joy,
 Flows, mix'd, a bitter sadness—I had hop'd
 To save from their perversion, a young beauty,
 Who, in her infant innocence, with me,
 Was made a slave by cruel Noradin ;
 When, sprinkling Syria with the blood of Christians,
 Cæsarea's walls saw Lusignan surpriz'd,
 And the proud crescent rise in bloody triumph.
 From this seraglio having young escap'd,
 Fate, three years since, restor'd me to my chains;
 Then, sent to Paris on my plighted faith,
 I flatter'd my fond hope with vain resolves,
 To guide the lovely Zara to that court
 Where Lewis has establis'd virtue's throne :
 But Osman will detain her—yet, not Osman ;
 • Zara herself forgets she is a Christian,
 And loves the tyrant Sultan !—Let that pass : 40
 I mourn a disappointment still more cruel ;
 The prop of all our Christian hope is lost !

Chat. Dispose me at your will—I am your own.

Ner. Oh, Sir, great Lusignan, so long their captive,

That last of an heroic race of kings!

That warrior, whose past fame has fill'd the world!

Osman refuses to my sighs for ever!

Chat. Nay, then we have been all redeem'd in vain;

Perish that soldier who would quit his chains,

And leave his noble chief behind in fetters.

Alas! you know him not as I have known him;

Thank Heav'n, that plac'd your birth so far remov'd

From those detested days of blood and woe:

But I, less happy, was condemned to see

Thy walls, Jerusalem, beat down—and all

Our pious fathers' labours lost in ruins!

Heav'n! had you seen the very temple rifled!

The sacred sepulchre itself profan'd!

Fathers with children mingled, flame together!

And our last king, oppress'd with age and arms, 60

Murder'd, and bleeding o'er his murder'd sons!

Then Lusignan, sole remnant of his race,

Rallying our fated few amidst the flames,

Fearless, beneath the crush of falling towers,

The conquerors and the conquer'd, groans and death!

Dreadful—and, waving in his hand his sword,

Red with the blood of infidels, cry'd out,

This way, ye faithful Christians! follow me.—

Ner. How full of glory was that brave retreat!

Chat. 'Twas Heav'n, no doubt, that sav'd and led
him on;

Pointed his path, and march'd our guardian guide:
 We reach'd Cæsarea—there the general voice
 Chose Lusignan, thenceforth to give us laws;
 Alas! 'twas vain—Cæsarea could not stand
 When Sion's self was fallen!—we were betray'd;
 And Lusignan condemn'd, to length of life,
 In chains, in damps, and darkness, and despair:
 " Yet great, amidst his miseries, he look'd,
 " As if he could not feel his fate himself,
 " But as it reach'd his followers. And shall we, 80
 " For whom our gen'rous leader suffer'd this,
 " Be vilely safe, and dare be bless'd without him?"

Ner. Oh! I should hate the liberty he shar'd not.
 I knew too well the miseries you describe,
 For I was born amidst them. Chains and death,
 Cæsarea lost, and Saracens triumphant,
 Were the first objects which my eyes e'er look'd on.
 Hurried, an infant, among other infants,
 Snatch'd from the bosoms of their bleeding mothers,
 A temple sav'd us, till the slaughter ceas'd;
 Then were we sent to this ill-fated city,
 Here, in the palace of our former kings,
 To learn, from Saracens, their hated faith,
 And be completely wretched.—Zara, too,
 Shar'd this captivity; we both grew up
 So near each other, that a tender friendship
 Endear'd her to my wishes: My fond heart—
 Pardon its weakness, bleeds to see her lost,
 And, for a barb'rous tyrant, quit her God!

Chat. Such is the Saracens', too fatal, policy! 100

Watchful seducers, still, of infant weakness :

“ Happy that you so young escap’d their hands !”

But let us think——May not this Zara’s int’reſt,

Loving the Sultan, and by him belov’d,

For Luſignan procure ſome ſofter ſentence ?

“ The wiſe and juſt, with innocence, may draw

“ Their own advantage from the guilt of others.”

Ner. How ſhall I gain admission to her preſence ?

Osman has baniſh’d me—but that’s a trifle ;

Will the ſeraglio’s portals open to me ?

Or, could I find that eaſy to my hopes,

What proſpect of ſucceſs from an apoſtate ?

On whom I cannot look without diſdain ;

“ And who will read her ſhame upon my brow.”

The hardeſt trial of a generous mind

Is, to court favours from a hand it ſcorns.

Chat. Think it is Luſignan we ſeek to ſerve.

Ner. Well—it ſhall be attempted—Hark ! who’s
this ?

Are my eyes falſe ; or, is it really ſhe ?

Enter ZARA.

Zar. Start not, my worthy friend ! I come to ſeek
you ;

120

The Sultan has permitted it ; fear nothing :——

But to confirm my heart which trembles near you,

Soften that angry air, nor look reproach ;

Why ſhould we fear each other, both miſtaking ?

Associates from our birth, one priſon held us,

One frienſhip taught affliction to be calm,

'Till Heav'n thought fit to favour your escape,
 And call you to the fields of happier France ;
 Thence, once again, it was my lot to find you
 A pris'ner here ; where, hid amongst a crowd
 Of undistinguish'd slaves, with less restraint,
 I shar'd your frequent converse ;——
 It pleas'd your pity, shall I say your friendship ?
 Or rather, shall I call it generous charity ?
 To form that noble purpose, to redeem
 Distressful Zara—you procur'd my ransom,
 And with a greatness that out-soar'd a crown,
 Return'd yourself a slave, to give me freedom ;
 But Heav'n has cast our fate for different climes :
 Here, in Jerusalem, I fix for ever ; 140
 Yet, among all the shine that marks my fortune,
 I shall with frequent tears remember yours ;
 Your goodness will for ever sooth my heart,
 And keep your image still a dweller there :
 Warm'd by your great example to protect
 That faith, that lifts humanity so high,
 I'll be a mother to distressful Christians.

Ner. How!—You protect the Christians ! you, who
 can

Abjure their saving truth, and coldly see
 Great Lusignan, their chief, die slow in chains !

Zar. To bring him freedom you behold me here ;
 You will this moment meet his eyes in joy.

Chat. Shall I then live to bless that happy hour ?

Ner. Can Christians owe so dear a gift to Zara ?

Zar. Hopeless I gathered courage to intreat

The Sultan for his liberty—amaz'd,
So soon to gain the happiness I wish'd !
See where they bring the good old chief grown dim
With age, by pain and sorrows hasten'd on !

Chat. How is my heart dissolv'd with sudden joy !

‘ *Zar.* I long to view his venerable face,
“ But tears, I know not why, eclipse my sight.
“ I feel, methinks, redoubled pity for him ;
“ But, I, alas ! myself have been a slave ;
“ And when we pity woes which we have felt,
“ 'Tis but a partial virtue !
“ *Ner.* Amazement !—Whence this greatness in an
infidel !”

Enter LUSIGNAN led in by two Guards.

Lus. Where am I ? From the dungeon's depth
what voice

Has call'd me to revisit long-lost day ?
Am I with Christians ?—I am weak—forgive me,
And guide my trembling steps. I'm full of years ;
My miseries have worn me more than age.
Am I in truth at liberty ? *[Seating himself.]*

Chat. You are ;
And every Christian's grief takes end with yours.

Lus. O, light ! O, dearer far than light, that voice !
Chatillon, is it you ? my fellow martyr !
And shall our wretchedness, indeed, have end ?
In what place are we now !—my feeble eyes,
Disus'd to day-light, long in vain to find you. 180

Chat. This was the palace of your royal fathers :

'Tis now the son of Nôradin's seraglio.

Zar. The master of this place—the mighty Osman,
Distinguishes, and loves to cherish virtue.

This gen'rous Frenchman, yet a stranger to you,
Drawn from his native soil, from peace and rest,
Brought the vow'd ransoms of ten Christian slaves,
Himself contented to remain a captive :

But Osman, charm'd by greatness like his own,
To equal what he lov'd, has giv'n him you.

Lus. So gen'rous France inspires her social sons !
They have been ever dear and useful to me—
Would I were nearer to him—Noble Sir,

[*Nerestan approaches.*]

How have I merited, that you for me
Should pass such distant seas, to bring me blessings,
And hazard your own safety for my sake ?

Ner. My name, Sir, is Nerestan ; born in Syria,
I wore the chains of slavery from my birth ;
Till quitting the proud crescent for the court 200
Where warlike Lewis reigns, beneath his eye
I learnt the trade of arms :—the rank I held
Was but the kind distinction which he gave me,
To tempt my courage to deserve regard.
Your sight, unhappy prince, would charm his eye ;
That best and greatest monarch will behold
With grief and joy those venerable wounds,
And print embraces where your fetters bound you.
All Paris will revere the cross's martyr ;
“ Paris, the refuge still of ruin'd kings !”

Lus. Alas ! in times long past, I've seen its glory :

When Philip the victorious liv'd, I fought
A-breast with Montmorency and Melun,
D'Estaing, De Neile, and the far-famous Courcy;—
Names which were then the praise and dread of war!
But what have I to do at Paris now?

I stand upon the brink of the cold grave;
That way my journey lies—to find, I hope,
The King of Kings, and ask the recompence
For all my woes, long-suffer'd for his sake——

You gen'rous witnesses of my last hour, 220
While I yet live, assist my humble prayers,
And join the resignation of my soul.

Nerestan! Chatillon!—and you, fair mourner!
Whose tears do honour to an old man's sorrows!
Pity a father, the unhappiest sure

That ever felt the hand of angry heaven!
My eyes, though dying, still can furnish tears;
Half my long life they flow'd, and still will flow!
A daughter and three sons, my heart's proud hopes,
Were all torn from me in their tend'rest years—
My friend Chatillon knows, and can remember—

Chat. Would I were able to forget your woe.

Lus. Thou wert a pris'ner with me in Cæsarea,
And there beheld'st my wife and two dear sons
Perish in flames.

Chat. A captive and in fetters,
I could not help 'em.

Lus. I know thou could'st not—
Oh, 'twas a dreadful scene! these eyes beheld it—
Husband and father, helpless I beheld it.—

Deny'd the mournful privilege to die !
 Oh, my poor children ! whom I now deplore ;
 If ye are saints in Heav'n, as sure ye are,
 Look with an eye of pity on that brother,
 That sister whom you left !—If I have yet,
 Or son or daughter :—for in early chains,
 Far from their lost an unassisting father,
 I heard that they were sent, with numbers more,
 To this seraglio ; hence to be dispers'd
 In nameless remnants o'er the east, and spread
 Our Christian miseries round a faithless world.

Chat. 'Twas true,—For in the horrors of that day,
 I snatch'd your infant daughter from her cradle ;
 “ But finding ev'ry hope of flight was vain,
 “ Scarce had I sprinkled, from a public fountain,
 “ Those sacred drops which wash the soul from sin,”
 When from my bleeding arms, fierce Saracens
 Forc'd the lost innocent, who smiling lay,
 And pointed, playful, at the swarthy spoilers !
 With her, your youngest, then your only son, 260
 Whose little life had reach'd the fourth sad year,
 And just giv'n sense to feel his own misfortunes,
 Was order'd to this city.

Ner. I, too, hither,
 Just at that fatal age, from lost Cæsarea,
 Came in that crowd of undistinguish'd Christians.—

Lus. You !—came you thence ?—Alas ! who knows
 but you
 Might heretofore have seen my two poor children.

[*Looking up.*] Hah, Madam! that small ornament you wear,

Its form a stranger to this country's fashion,
How long has it been yours?

Zar. From my first birth, Sir—

Ah, what! you seem surpriz'd!—why should this
move you?

Lus. Would you confide it to my trembling hands?

Zar. To what new wonders am I now reserv'd?

Oh, Sir! what mean you?

Lus. Providence and Heaven!

Oh, failing eyes, deceive ye not my hope?

Can this be possible?—Yes, yes—'tis she!

This little cross—I know it, by sure marks! 280

Oh! take me, Heav'n! while I can die with joy—

Zar. Oh, do not, Sir, distract me!—rising thoughts;
And hopes, and fears, o'erwhelm me!

Lus. Tell me, yet,

Has it remain'd for ever in your hands?

What—both brought captives from Cæsarea hither?

Zar. Both, both—

“ Oh, heaven! have I then found a father? ”;

Lus. Their voice! their looks!

The living images of their dear mother!

O God! who see'st my tears, and know'st my thoughts

Do not forsake me at this dawn of hope —

Strengthen my heart, too feeble for this joy.

Madam! Nerestan!—Help me, Chatillon! [*Rising.*]

Nerestan, hast thou on thy breast a scar,

Which ere Cæsarea fell, from a fierce hand,
Surprizing us by night, my child receiv'd ?

Ner. Bless'd hand !—I bear it,—Sir, the mark is
there !

Lus. Merciful heaven !

Ner. [*Kneeling.*] Oh, Sir !—Oh, Zara, kneel.——

Zar. [*Kneeling.*] My father !—Oh !—— 301

Lus. Oh, my lost children !

Both. Oh !

Lus. My son ! my daughter ! lost in embracing you,
I would now die, lest this should prove a dream.

Chat. How touch'd is my glad heart, to see their
joy !

Lus. They shall not tear you from my arms—my
children !

Again, I find you—dear in wretchedness :

Oh, my brave son—and thou, my nameless daughter !

Now dissipate all doubt, remove all dread,

Has Heaven, that gives me back my children—giv'n
'em,

Such as I lost 'em ?—Come they Christians to me ?

One weeps and one declines a conscious eye !

Your silence speaks—too well I understand it.

Zar. I cannot, Sir deceive you—Osman's laws
Were mine—and Osman is not Christian.——

Lus. Her words are thunder bursting on my head ; .

Wert not for thee, my son, I now should die ;

Full sixty years I fought the Christian's cause,

Saw their doom'd temple fall, their pow'r destroy'd :

'Twenty, a captive, in a dungeon's depth, 321

Yet never for myself my tears sought Heaven ;
All for my children rose my fruitless prayers :
Yet, what avails a father's wretched joy ?
I have a daughter gain'd, and Heav'n an enemy.
Oh, my misguided daughter—lose not thy faith,
Reclaim thy birthright—think upon the blood
Of twenty Christian kings, that fills thy veins ;
'Tis heroes' blood—the blood of saints and martyrs !
What would thy mother feel, to see thee thus !
She, and thy murder'd brothers !—think, they call
thee ?

Think that thou seest 'em stretch their bloody arms,
And weep to win thee from their murd'rer's bosom.
Ev'n in the place where thou betray'st thy God,
He dy'd, my child, to save thee.—“ Turn thy eyes,
“ And see ; for thou art near his sacred sepulchre ;
“ Thou canst not move a step, but where he trod !”
Thou tremblest—Oh ! admit me to thy soul ;
Kill not thy aged, thy afflicted father ; 339
“ Take not thus soon, again, the life thou gav'st him :”
Shame not thy mother—nor renounce thy God.—
'Tis past—Repentance dawns in thy sweet eyes ;
I see bright truth descending to thy heart,
And now, my long-lost child is found for ever.

“ *Ner.* Oh, doubly blest ! a sister, and a soul,
“ To be redeem'd together !”

Zar. Oh, my father !

Dear author of my life ! inform me, teach me,
What should my duty do ?

Lus. By one short word,

To dry up all my tears, and make life welcome,
Say thou art a Christian——

Zar. Sir—I am a Christian.

Lus. Receive her, gracious Heaven! and bless her
for it.

Enter ORASMIN.

Oras. Madam, the Sultan order'd me to tell you,
That he expects you instant quit this place,
And bid your last farewell to these vile Christians.
You, captive Frenchmen, follow me; for you,
It is my task to answer.——

Chat. Still new miseries! 360

How cautious man should be, to say, I'm happy!

Lus. These are the times, my friends, to try our
firmness,

Our Christian firmness.——

Zar. Alas, sir! Oh!

Lus. Oh, you!—I dare not name you!
Farewell—but, come what may, be sure remember
You keep the fatal secret! for the rest,
Leave all to Heaven——be faithful, and be blest.

[*Exeunt.*]

ACT III. SCENE I.

OSMAN and ORASMIN.

Osman.

ORASMIN, this alarm was false and groundless;
Lewis no longer turns his arms on me;

The French, grown weary by a length of woes,
Wish not at once to quit their fruitful plains,
And famish on Arabia's desert sands.
Their ships, 'tis true, have spread the Syrian seas :
And Lewis, hovering o'er the coast of Cyprus,
Alarms the fears of Asia—But I've learnt,
That steering wide from our unmenac'd ports,
He points his thunder at th' Egyptian shore.
There let him war, and waste my enemies ;
Their mutual conflict will but fix my throne.—
Release those Christians—I restore their freedom ;
'Twill please their master, nor can weaken me :
Transport 'em at my cost, to find their king ;
I wish to have him know me : carry thither
This Lusignan, whom, tell him, I restore,
Because I cannot fear his fame in arms ;
But love him for his virtue and his blood.
Tell him, my father, having conquer'd twice, 20
Condemn'd him to perpetual chains ; but I
Have set him free, that I might triumph more.

Oras. The Christians gain an army in his name.

Osm. I cannot fear a sound.—

Oras. But, sir——should Lewis——

Osm. Tell Lewis and the world—it shall be so :

Zara propos'd it, and my heart approves :

Thy statesman's reason is too dull for love !

“ Why wilt thou force me to confess it all ?

“ Tho' I to Lewis send back Lusignan,

“ I give him but to Zara—I have griev'd her ;

“ And ow'd her the atonement of this joy.

“ Thy false advices, which but now misled
 “ My anger, to confine those helpless Christians,
 “ Gave her a pain; I feel for her and me:”
 But I talk on, and waste the smiling moments.
 For one long hour I yet defer my nuptials;
 “ But, ’tis not lost, that hour! ’twill be all hers!”
 She would employ it in a conference
 With that Nerestan, whom thou know’st——that
 Christian!

Oras. And have you, sir, indulged that strange desire?

Osm. What mean’st thou? They were infant slaves together;

Friends should part kind, who are to meet no more.
 When Zàra asks, I will refuse her nothing:
 Restraint was never made for those we love.
 Down with those rigours of the proud seraglio;
 I hate its laws—where blind austerity
 Sinks virtue to necessity.—My blood
 Disclaims your Asian jealousy;—I hold
 The fierce, free plainness of my Scythian ancestors,
 Their open confidence, their honest hate,
 Their love unfearing, and their anger told.
 Go—the good Christian waits—conduct him to her;
 Zara expects thee—What she wills, obey.

[*Exit* Osman.]

Oras. Hol Christian! enter——wait a moment here.

Enter NERESTAN.

Zara will soon approach—I go to find her.

[*Exit* Oras.]

Ner. In what a state, in what a place, I leave her ?
Oh, faith ! Oh, father ! Oh, my poor lost sister !
She's here——

Enter ZARA,

Thank Heaven, it is not, then, unlawful 60
To see you, yet once more, my lovely sister !
Not all so happy !——We, who met but now,
Shall never meet again——for Lusignan——
We shall be orphans still, and want a father.

Zar. Forbid it Heaven !

Ner. His last sad hour's at hand——
That flow of joy, which follow'd our discovery,
Too strong and sudden for his age's weakness,
Wasting his spirits, dry'd the source of life,
And nature yields him up to time's demand.
Shall he not die in peace ?——Oh ! let no doubt
Disturb his parting moments with distrust ;
Let me, when I return to close his eyes,
Compose his mind's impatience too, and tell him,
You are confirm'd a Christian !——

Zar. Oh ! may his soul enjoy, in earth and heaven,
Eternal rest ! nor let one thought, one sigh,
One bold complaint of mine recall his cares !
But you have injur'd me, who still can doubt.——
What ! am I not your sister ? and shall you 80
Refuse me credit ? You suppose me light ;
You, who should judge my honour by your own,
Shall you distrust a truth I dar'd avow,
And stamp apostate on a sister's heart !

Ner. Ah! do not misconceive me!—if I err'd,
Affection, not distrust, misled my fear;
Your will may be a Christian, yet, not you;
There is a sacred mark—a sign of faith,
A pledge of promise, that must firm your claim;
Wash you from guilt, and open Heaven before you.
Swear, swear by all the woes we all have borne,
By all the martyr'd saints, who call you daughter,
That you consent, this day, to seal our faith,
By that mysterious rite which waits your call.

Zar. I swear by Heaven, and all its holy host,
Its saints, its martyrs, its attesting angels,
And the dread presence of its living author,
To have no faith but yours;—to die a Christian!
Now, tell me what this mystic faith requires.

Ner. To hate the happiness of Osman's throne,
And love that God, who, thro' his maze of woes,
Has brought us all, unhoping, thus together.
For me—I am a soldier, uninstructed,
Nor daring to instruct, tho' strong in faith:
But I will bring th' ambassador of Heaven,
To clear your views, and lift you to your God!
Be it your task to gain admission for him.—
But where? from whom?—Oh! thou immortal Power!
Whence can we hope it, in this curs'd seraglio?
Who is this slave of Osman? Yes, this slave!
Does she not boast the blood of twenty kings?
Is not her race the same with that of Lewis?
Is she not Lusignan's unhappy daughter?
A Christian, and my sister?—yet a slave!

A willing slave!—I dare not speak more plainly.

Zar. Cruell! go on—Alas! you do not know me!
At once, a stranger to my secret fate,
My pains, my fears, my wishes, and my power:
I am—I will be Christian—will receive
This holy priest, with his mysterious blessing;
I will not do nor suffer aught unworthy
Myself, my father, or my father's race.—
But, tell me—nor be tender on this point,—
What punishment your Christian laws decree,
For an unhappy wretch, who, to herself
Unknown, and all abandon'd by the world,
Lost and enslav'd, has, in her sov'reign master,
Found a protector, generous as great,
Has touch'd his heart, and giv'n him all her own?

Ner. The punishment of such a slave should be
Death in this world—and pain in that to come.

Zar. I am that slave—strike here—and save my
shame.

Ner. Destruction to my hopes!—Can it be you?

Zar. It is—Ador'd by Osman, I adore him:
This hour the nuptial rites will make us one.

Ner. What! marry Osman!—Let the world grow
dark,
That the extinguish'd sun may hide thy shame!
Could it be thus, it were no crime to kill thee.

Zar. Strike, strike—I love him—yes, by Heav'n, I
love him.

Ner. Death is thy due—but not thy due from me:
Yet, were the honour of our house no bar—

My father's fame, and the too gentle laws
Of that religion which thou hast disgrac'd——
Did not the God thou quitt'st hold back my arm——
Not there—I could not there—but, by my soul,
I would rush, desp'rate, to the Sultan's breast,
And plunge my sword in his proud heart who damns
thee.

Oh! shame! shame! shame! at such a time as this!
When Lewis! that awak'ner of the world,
Beneath the lifted cross makes Egypt pale,
And draws the sword of Heaven to spread our faith!
Now to submit to see my sister doom'd
A bosom slave to him whose tyrant heart
But measures glory by the Christian's woe.
Y^es—I will dare acquaint our father with it;
Departing Lusignan may live so long,
As just to hear thy shame, and die to 'scape it.

Zar. Stay—my too angry brother—stay—perhaps,
Zara has resolution great as thine:

'Tis cruel—and unkind!—Thy words are crimes;
My weakness but misfortune! Dost thou suffer;
I suffer more;—Oh! would to Heaven this blood
Of twenty boasted kings would stop at once,
And stagnate in my heart!—It then no more
Would rush in boiling fevers thro' my veins,
And ev'ry trembling drop be fill'd with Osman.
How has he lov'd me! how has he oblig'd me!
I owe thee to him! What has he not done,
To justify his boundless pow'r of charming?
For me, he softens the severe decrees

Of his own faith ;—and is it just that mine
Should bid me hate him, but because he loves me ?
No—I will be a Christian—but preserve
My gratitude as sacred as my faith ;
If I have death to fear for Osman's sake,
It must be from his coldness, not his love.

Ner. I must at once condemn and pity thee ;
“ I cannot point thee out which way to go,
“ But Providence will lend its light to guide thee.
“ That sacred rite, which thou shalt now receive,
“ Will strengthen and support thy feeble heart,
“ To live an innocent, or die a martyr :”
Here, then, begin performance of thy vow ;
Here, in the trembling horrors of thy soul,
Promise thy king, thy father, and thy God,
Not to accomplish these detested nuptials,
Till first the rev'rend priest has clear'd your eyes,
Taught you to know, and giv'n you claim to Heav'n.
Promise me this——

Zar. So, bless me, Heav'n ! I do.——
Go—hasten the good priest, I will expect him ;
But first return—cheer my expiring father,
Tell him I am, and will be all he wishes me :
Tell him, to give him life 'twere joy to die.

Ner. I go—Farewel—farewel, unhappy sister !

[*Exit Nerestan.*]

Zar. I am alone—and now be just, my heart !
And tell me, wilt thou dare betray thy God ?
What am I ? What am I about to be ?
Daughter of Lusignan—or wife to Osman ?

Am I a lover most, or most a Christian ?
 " Wou'd Selima were come ! and yet 'tis just,
 " All friends should fly her who forsakes herself."
 What shall I do ?—What heart has strength to bear
 These double weights of duty ?—Help me, Heav'n !
 To thy hard laws I render up my soul :
 But, Oh ! demand it back—for now 'tis Osman's.

Enter OSMAN.

Osm. Shine out, appear, be found, my lovely Zara !
 Impatient eyes attend—the rites expect thee ;
 And my devoted heart no longer brooks
 This distance from its soft'ner !—" all the lamps
 " Of nuptial love are lighted, and burn pure,
 " As if they drew their brightness from thy blushes :
 " The holy mosque is fill'd with fragrant fumes,
 " Which emulate the sweetness of thy breathing :
 " My prostrate people all confirm my choice,
 " And send their souls to heaven in prayers for blessings.
 " Thy envious rivals, conscious of thy right,
 " Approve superior charms, and join to praise thee ;
 " The throne that waits thee, seems to shine more
 richly,
 " As all its gems, with animated lustre,
 " Fear'd to look dim beneath the eyes of Zara !"
 Come, my slow love ! the ceremonies wait thee ;
 Come, and begin from this dear hour my triumph.
Zar. Oh, what a wretch am I ! Oh, grief ! Oh,
 love !

Osm. Come——come——

Zar. Where shall I hide my blushes?

Osm. Blushes——here, in my bosom, hide 'em.

Zar. My lord!

Osm. Nay, Zara—give me thy hand, and come——

Zar. Instruct me, Heaven!

What I should say—Alas! I cannot speak.

Osm. Away——this modest, sweet reluctant trifling
But doubles my desires, and thy own beauties.

Zar. Ah, me!

Osm. Nay—but thou should'st not be too cruel.

Zar. I can no longer bear it—Oh, my lord—

Osm. Ha!——“What?—whence?—how?”——

Zar. My lord! my sov'reign!

Heav'n knows this marriage would have been a bliss
Above my humble hopes!—yet, witness love!
Not from the grandeur of your throne, that bliss,
But from the pride of calling Osman mine.

“Would you had been no emperor! and I

“Possess'd of power and charms deserving you!

“That, slighting Asia's thrones, I might alone

“Have left a proffer'd world, to follow you

“Through deserts, uninhabited by men,

“And bless'd with ample room for peace and love:”

But, as it is——these Christians——

Osm. Christians! What!

How start two images into thy thoughts,
So distant——as the Christians and my love!

Zar. That good old Christian, rev'rend Lusignan,
Now dying, ends his life and woes together.

Osm. Well! let him die—What has thy heart to feel,
Thus pressing, and thus tender, from the death
Of an old wretched Christian?—Thank our pro-
phet,

Thou art no Christian!—Educated here,
Thy happy youth was taught our better faith:
Sweet as thy pity shines, 'tis now mis-tim'd.
What! tho' an aged suff'rer dies unhappy,
Why should his foreign fate disturb our joys?

Zar. Sir, if you love me, and would have me think
That I am truly dear—

Osm. Heaven! if I love!

Zar. Permit me—

Osm. What?

Zar. To desire—

Osm. Speak out.

Zar. The nuptial rites
May be deferr'd till—

Osm. What!—Is that the voice
Of Zara?

Zar. Oh, I cannot bear his frown!

Osm. Of Zara!

Zar. It is dreadful to my heart,
To give you but a seeming cause for anger;
Pardon my grief—Alas! I cannot bear it;
There is a painful terror in your eye
That pierces to my soul—hid from your sight
I go to make a moment's truce with tears,
And gather force to speak of my despair.

[Exit *disordered*.]

Osm. I stand immoveable, like senseless marble ;
Horror had frozen my suspended tongue ;
And an astonish'd silence robb'd my will
Of power to tell her that she shock'd my soul !
Spoke she to me ?—Sure I misunderstood her !
Cou'd it be me she left ?—What have I seen !

Enter ORASMIN.

Orasmin, what a change is here !—She's gone,
And I permitted it, I know not how.

Oras. Perhaps you but accuse the charming fault
Of innocence, too modest oft in love.

Osm. But why, and whence those tears ?—those
looks ! that flight !

That grief, so strongly stamp'd on every feature ?
If it has been that Frenchman !—What a thought !

How low, how horrid a suspicion that !

“ The dreadful flash at once gives light and kills me ;

“ My too bold confidence repell'd my caution—

“ An infidel ! a slave !—a heart like mine

“ Reduc'd to suffer from so vile a rival !”

But tell me, did'st thou mark 'em at their parting ?

Did'st thou observe the language of their eyes ?

Hide nothing from me—Is my love betray'd ?

Tell me my whole disgrace : nay, if thou tremblest,

I hear thy pity speak, though thou art silent.

Oras. I tremble at the pangs I see you suffer.

Let not your angry apprehension urge

Your faithful slave to irritate your anguish ;

I did, 'tis true, observe some parting tears ;

But they were tears of charity and grief :
I cannot think there was a cause deserving
This agony of passion——

Osm. Why no——I thank thee——
Orasmin, thou art wise ! It cou'd not be
That I should stand expos'd to such an insult.
Thou know'st, had Zara meant me the offence,
She wants not wisdom to have hid it better :
How rightly didst thou judge !—Zara shall know it,
And thank thy honest service——After all,
Might she not have some cause for tears, which I
Claim no concern in—but the grief it gives her ?
What an unlikely fear—from a poor slave,
Who goes to-morrow, and, no doubt, who wishes,
Nay, who resolves to see these climes no more.

Oras. Why did you, Sir, against our country's
custom,
Indulge him with a second leave to come ?
He said, he should return once more to see her.

Osm. Return ! the traitor ! he return !—Dares he
Presume to press a second interview ?
Would he be seen again ?——He shall be seen ;
But dead.——I'll punish the audacious slave,
To teach the faithless fair to feel my anger.
Be still, my transports ; violence is blind :
I know my heart at once is fierce and weak ;
“ I feel that I descend below myself ;
“ Zara can never justly be suspected ;
“ Her sweetness was not formed to cover treason :
“ Yet, Osman must not stoop to woman's follies ;

“ Their tears, complaints, regrets, and reconcile-
ments,

“ With all their light, capricious roll of changes,

“ Are arts too vulgar to be tried on me.

“ It would become me better to resume

“ The empire of my will.” Rather than fall

Beneath myself, I must, how dear soe'er

It costs me, rise—till I look down on Zara!—

Away—but mark me—these seraglio doors,

Against all Christians be they henceforth shut,

Close as the dark retreats of silent death.

[*Exit Orasmin.*

What have I done, just Heav'n! thy rage to move,

That thou shouldst sink me down, so low to love?

[*Exit.*

ACT IV. SCENE I.

ZARA, SELIMA.

Selima.

AH, Madam! how at once I grieve your fate,
And how admire your virtue!—Heaven permits,
And Heaven will give you strength, to bear misfor-
tune;

To break these chains, so strong and yet so dear.

Zar. Oh, that I could support the fatal struggle!

Sel. Th' Eternal aids your weakness, sees your will,
Directs your purpose, and rewards your sorrows.

Zar. Never had wretch more cause to hope he does.

Sel. What! tho' you here no more behold your father?

There is a Father to be found above,
Who can restore that father to his daughter.

Zar. But I have planted pain in Osman's bosom;
He loves me, even to death! and I reward him
With anguish and despair.—How base! how cruel!
But I deserv'd him not; I should have been
Too happy, and the hand of Heav'n repell'd me.

Sel. What! will you then regret the glorious loss,
And hazard thus a vict'ry bravely won?

Zar. Inhuman vict'ry!——thou dost not know
This love so pow'rful, this sole joy of life, 20
This first, best hope of earthly happiness,
Is yet less pow'rful in my heart than Heaven!
To him who made that heart I offer it;
There, there, I sacrifice my bleeding passion;
I pour before him ev'ry guilty tear;
I beg him to efface the fond impression,
And fill with his own image all my soul:
But, while I weep and sigh, repent and pray,
Remembrance brings the object of my love,
And ev'ry light illusion floats before him.
I see, I hear him, and again he charms!
Fills my glad soul, and shines 'twixt me and Heav'n!
Oh, all ye royal ancestors! Oh, father!
Mother! You Christians, and the Christians' God!
You who deprive me of this gen'rous lover!
If you permit me not to live for him,

Let me not live at all, and I am bless'd :

“ Let me die innocent ; let his dear hand

“ Close the sad eyes of her he stoop'd to love,

“ And I acquit my fate, and ask no more. 40

“ But he forgives me not——regardless now,

“ Whether, or how I live, or when I die.

“ He quits me, scorns me——and I yet live on,

“ And talk of death as distant.”——

Sel. Ah ! despair not ;

Trust your eternal helper, and be happy.

Zar. Why——what has Osman done, that he too
should not ?

Has Heaven so nobly form'd his heart to hate it ?

Gen'rous and just, beneficent and brave,

Where he but Christian——What can man be more ?

I wish, methinks, this rev'rend priest was come

To free me from these doubts, which shake my soul :

Yet know not why I should not dare to hope,

That Heav'n, whose mercy all confess and feel,

Will pardon and approve th' alliance wish'd :

Perhaps it seats me on the throne of Syria,

To tax my pow'r for these good Christians' comfort.

Thou know'st the mighty Saladine, who first

Conquer'd this empire from my father's race,

Who, like my Osman charm'd th' admiring world,

Drew breath, tho' Syrian, from a Christian mother.

Sel. What mean you, madam ! Ah ! you do not see——

Zar. Yes, yes—I see it all ; I am not blind :

I see my country and my race condemn me ;

I see, that spite of all, I still love Osman.

What if I now go throw me at his feet,
And tell him there sincerely what I am?

Scl. Consider—that might cost your brother's life,
Expose the Christians, and betray you all.

Zar. You do not know the noble heart of Osman.

Scl. I know him the protector of a faith,
Sworn enemy to ours;—The more he loves,
The less will he permit you to profess
Opinions which he hates: to-night the priest,
In private introduc'd, attends you here;
You promis'd him admission——

Zar. Would I had not!

I promis'd, too, to keep this fatal secret;
My father's urg'd command requir'd it of me;
I must obey, all dangerous as it is;
Compell'd to silence, Osman is enrag'd,
Suspicion follows, and I lose his love.

80

Enter OSMAN.

Osm. Madam! there was a time when my charm'd
heart

Made it a virtue to be lost in love;
When, without blushing, I indulg'd my flame,
And every day still made you dearer to me.
You taught me, madam, to believe my love
Rewarded and return'd—nor was that hope,
Methinks, too bold for reason. Emperors
Who choose to sigh devoted at the feet
Of beauties, whom the world conceive their slaves,
Have fortune's claim, at least, to sure success:
But 'twere prophane to think of power in love.

Dear as my passion makes you, I decline
 Possession of her charms, whose heart's another's.
 You will not find me a weak, jealous lover,
 By coarse reproaches, giving pain to you,
 And shaming my own greatness—wounded deeply,
 Yet shunning and disdaining low complaint,
 I come——to tell you—— 100

Zar. Give my trembling heart
 A moment's respite——

Osm. “ That unwilling coldness
 “ Is the just prize of your capricious lightness;
 “ Your ready arts may spare the fruitless pains
 “ Of colouring deceit with fair pretences;
 “ I would not wish to hear your slight excuses;
 “ I cherish ignorance, to save my blushes.”
 Osman in every trial shall remember
 That he is emperor.—Whate'er I suffer,
 'Tis due to honour that I give up you,
 And to my injur'd bosom take despair,
 Rather than shamefully possess you sighing,
 Convinc'd those sighs were never meant for me—
 Go, madam—you are free—from Osman's pow'r—
 Expect no wrongs, but see his face no more.

Zar. At last, 'tis come—the fear'd, the murd'ring
 moment

Is come——and I am curs'd by earth and heaven!
 [*Throws herself on the ground.*]

If it is true that I am lov'd no more—— 120
 If you——

Osm. It is too true, my fame requires it;
 It is too true, that I unwilling leave you:

That I at once renounce you and adore——

Zara!——you weep!

Zar. If I am doom'd to loose you,
If I must wander o'er an empty world,
Unloving and unlov'd——Oh! yet, do justice
To the afflicted——do not wrong me doubly:
Punish me, if 'tis needful to your peace,
But say not, I deserv'd it——“ This, at least,
“ Believe——for not the greatness of your soul
“ Is truth more pure and sacred——no regret
“ Can touch my bleeding heart, for I have lost
“ The rank of her you raise to share your throne.
“ I know I never ought to have been there ;
“ My fate and my defects require I lose you.”
But ah! my heart was never known to Osman.
May Heav'n that punishes for ever hate me,
If I regret the loss of aught but you.

Osm. Rise——“ rise, this means not love ?” 140

“ *Zar.* Strike——Strike me, Heaven!”

Osm. What! is it love to force yourself to wound
The heart you wish to gladden? But I find
Lovers least know themselves; for I believ'd,
That I had taken back the power I gave you;
Yet see!——you did but weep, and have resum'd me!
Proud as I am——I must confess, one wish
Evades my power——the blessing to forget you.
Zara——thy tears were form'd to teach disdain,
That softness can disarm it.——'Tis decreed.
I must for ever love—but from what cause,
If thy consenting heart partakes my fires,

Art thou reluctant to a blessing meant me?
Speak! "Is it levity——or, is it fear?
"Fear of a power that, but for blessing thee,
"Had, without joy, been painful."——Is it artifice?
Oh! spare the needless pains——Art was not made
For Zara.——Art, however innocent,
Looks like deceiving——I abhorr'd it ever.

Zar. Alas! I have no art; not even enough 160
To hide this love, and this distress you give me.

Osm. New riddles! Speak with plainness to my soul;
What canst thou mean?

Zar. I have no power to speak it.

Osm. Is it some secret dangerous to my state?
Is it some Christian plot grown ripe against me?

Zar. Lives there a wretch so vile as to betray you!
Osman is bless'd beyond the reach of fear:
Fears and misfortunes threaten only Zara.

Osm. Why threaten Zara?

Zar. Permit me, at your feet,
Thus trembling, to beseech a favour from you.

Osm. A favour! Oh, you guide the will of Osman.

Zar. Ah! would to Heav'n our duties were united,
"Firm as our thoughts and wishes!" But this day;
But this one sad, unhappy day, permit me,
Alone, and far-divided from your eye,
To cover my distress, lest you, too tender,
Should see and share it with me—from to-morrow,
I will not have a thought conceal'd from you. 180

"*Osm.* What strange disquiet, from what stranger
cause!

"*Zar.* If I am really bless'd with Osman's love,

“ He will not then refuse this humble prayer.”

Osm. If it must be, it must.—Be pleas'd, my will
Takes purpose from your wishes ; and consent
Depends not on my choice, but your decree :
Go——but remember how he loves, who thus
Finds a delight in pain, because you give it.

Zar. It gives me more than pain to make you feel it.

Osm. And——can you, Zara, leave me ?

Zar. Alas ! my lord ! *[Exit Zara.*

Osm. *[Alone.]* It should be yet, methinks, too soon
to fly me !

Too soon, as yet, to wrong my easy faith.
The more I think, the less I can conceive,
What hidden cause should raise such strange despair!
Now, when her hopes have wings, and every wish
Is courted to be lively !—When I love,
And joy and empire press her to their bosom ;
“ When not alone belov'd, but ev'n a lover : 199
“ Professing and accepting ; bless'd and blessing ;
“ To see her eyes, through tears, shine mystic love !
“ 'Tis madness ! and I were unworthy power,
“ To suffer longer the capricious insult !”
Yet, was I blameless ?—No—I was too rash ;
I have felt jealousy, and spoke it to her ;
I have distrusted her—and still she loves :
Gen'rous atonement that ! “ and 'tis my duty
“ To expiate, by a length of soft indulgence,
“ The transports of a rage, which still was love.
“ Henceforth, I never will suspect her false ;
“ Nature's plain power of charming dwells about her,

“ And innocence gives force to ev’ry word.
“ I owe full confidence to all she looks,
“ For in her eye shines truth, and ev’ry beam
“ Shoots confirmation round her.”—I remark’d,
Ev’n while she wept, her soul a thousand times
Sprung to her lips, and long’d to leap to mine,
With honest, ardent utt’rance of her love.——
Who can possess a heart so low, so base,
To look such tenderness, and yet have none? 220

Enter MELIDOR with ORASMIN.

Mel. This letter, great disposer of the world!
Address’d to Zara, and in private brought,
Your faithful guards this moment intercepted,
And humbly offer to your sovereign eye.

Osm. Come nearer, give it me.—To Zara!—Rise.
Bring it with speed——Shame on your flattering
distance——

[Advancing, and snatching the letter.]

Be honest—and approach me like a subject
Who serves the prince, yet not forgets the man.

Mel. One of the Christian slaves, whom late your
bounty

Releas’d from bondage, sought with heedful guile,
Unnotic’d to deliver it.——Discover’d
He waits, in chains, his doom from your decree.

Osm. Leave me! I tremble, as if something fatal
Were meant me from this letter——should I read it?

Oras. Who knows but it contains some happy truth
That may remove all doubts, and calm your heart?

Osm. Be it as 'twill—it shall be read—" my hands
 " Have apprehension that out-reaches mine !
 " Why should they tremble thus ?"—'tis done—
 and now, *[Opens the letter.*
 Fate, be thy call obey'd——Orasmin, mark—— 240

' There is a secret passage tow'rd the mosque ;
 ' That way you might escape ; and unperceiv'd,
 ' Fly your observers, and fulfil our hope ;
 ' Despise the danger, and depend on me,
 ' Who wait you, but to die if you deceive."

Hell ! tortures ! death ! and woman !—What, Orasmin !
 Are we awake ? Heardst thou ? Can this be Zara ?

Oras. Would I had lost all sense—for what I heard
 Has cover'd my afflicted heart with horror.

Osm. Thou seest how I am treated !

Oras. Monstrous treason !

To an affront like this you cannot——must not
 Remain insensible——You, who but now,
 From the most slight suspicion, felt such pain,
 Must, in the horror of so black a guilt,
 Find an effectual cure, and banish love.

Osm. Seek her this instant—go, Orasmin, fly—
 Shew her this letter—bid her read and tremble :
 Then, in the rising horrors of her guilt,
 Stab her unfaithful breast, and let her die. 260
 Say, while thou strik'st——Stay, stay, return and
 pity me ;

" I will think first a moment—Let that Christian

“ Be strait confronted with her—Stay—I will,

“ I will—I know not what!”——Would I were
dead!

Would I had dy’d, unconscious of this shame!

Oras. Never did prince receive so bold a wrong,

Osm. See here detected this infernal secret!

This fountain of her tears, which my weak heart

Mistook for marks of tenderness and pain!

Why! what a reach has woman to deceive!

Under how fine a veil of grief and fear

Did she propose retirement ’till to-morrow!

And I, blind dotard! gave the fool’s consent,

Sooth’d her, and suffer’d her to go!——She parted,

Dissolv’d in tears; and parted to betray me!

“ *Oras.* Reflection serves but to confirm her guilt.

“ At length resume yourself; awaken thought;

“ Assert your greatness; and resolve like Osman.

“ *Osm.* Nerestan, too—Was this the boasted honour

“ Of that proud Christian, whom Jerusalem 280

“ Grew loud in praising! whose half-*envy’d* virtue

“ I wonder’d at myself; and felt disdain

“ To be but equal to a Christian’s greatness!

“ And does he thank me thus; base infidel!

“ Honest, pretending, pious, praying villain?

“ Yet Zara is a thousand times more base,

“ More hypocrite, than he? A slave! a wretch!

“ So low, so lost, that even the vilest labours,

“ In which he lay condemn’d, could never sink him

“ Beneath his native infamy——Did she not know

“ What I have done, what suffer’d—for her sake?”

Oras. Could you, my gracious lord ! forgive my
zeal,

You would——

Osm. I know it—thou art right—I'll see her—
I'll tax her in thy presence ;—I'll upbraid her——
I'll let her learn—Go—find, and bring her to me.

“ *Oras.* Alas, my lord ! disorder'd as you are,
“ What can you wish to say ?

“ *Osm.* I know not, now—
“ But I resolve to see her—lest she think 300
“ Her falsehood has, perhaps, the power to grieve
me.

Oras. Believe me, sir, your threat'nings, your
complaints,
What will they all produce, but Zara's tears
To quench this fancy'd anger ! Your lost heart,
Seduc'd against itself, will search but reasons
To justify the guilt, which gives it pain :
Rather conceal from Zara this discovery ;
And let some trusty slave convey the letter,
Reclos'd to her own hand—then shall you learn,
Spite of her frauds, disguise, and artifice,
The firmness, or abasement of her soul.

Osm. Thy counsel charms me ! We'll about it now.
“ 'Twill be some recompence, at least, to see
“ Her blushes when detected.——

“ *Oras.* Oh, my lord !
“ I doubt you in the trial——for your heart.——

“ *Osm.* Distrust me not—my love, indeed, is weak,
“ But honour and disdain more strong than Zara.”

Here, take this fatal letter—chuse a slave
 Whom yet she never saw, and who retains 320
 His tried fidelity—Dispatch—begone——

[*Exit Orasmin.*

Now, whither shall I turn my eyes and steps,
 The surest way to shun her : and give time
 For this discovering trial?——Heav'n! she's here !

Enter ZARA.

So, Madam ! fortune will befriend my cause,
 And free me from your fetters.—You are met
 Most aptly, to dispel a new-ris'n doubt,
 That claims the finest of your arts to gloss it.
 Unhappy each by other, it is time
 To end our mutual pain, that both may rest :
 You want not generosity, but love ;
 My pride forgotten, my obtruded throne,
 My favours, cares, respect, and tenderness,
 Touching your gratitude, provok'd regard ;
 'Till, by a length of benefits besieg'd,
 Your heart submitted, and you thought 'twas love :
 But you deceiv'd yourself and injur'd me.
 There is, I'm told, an object more deserving
 Your love than Osman——I would know his name :
 Be just, nor trifle with my anger : tell me 340
 Now, while expiring pity struggles faint ;
 While I have yet, perhaps, the pow'r to pardon :
 Give up the bold invader of my claim,
 And let him die to save thee. Thou art known ;
 Think and resolve—While I yet speak, renounce him;

While yet the thunder rolls suspended, stay it;
 Let thy voice charm me, and recall my soul,
 That turns averse, and dwells no more on Zara.

Zar. Can it be Osman speaks, and speaks to Zara?
 Learn, cruel? learn, that this afflicted heart,
 This heart which Heav'n delights to prove by tor-
 tures,

Did it not love, has pride and power to shun you.

"Alas! you will not know me! What have I

"To fear, but that unhappy love you question?

"That love which only could outweigh the shame

"I feel, while I descend to weep my wrongs."

I know not whether Heav'n, that frowns upon me,

Has destin'd my unhappy days for yours;

But, be my fate or bless'd or curs'd, I swear

By honour, dearer ev'n than life or love, 860

Could Zara be but mistress of herself,

She would, with cold regard, look down on kings,

And, you alone excepted, fly 'em all.

"Would you learn more, and open all my heart?

"Know then, that, spite of this renew'd injustice,

"I do not—cannot wish to love you less:

"That, long before you look'd so low as Zara

"She gave her heart to Osman; yours, before

"Your benefits had bought her, or your eye

"Had thrown distinction round her; never had,

"Nor ever will acknowledge other lover:"—

And to this sacred truth, attesting Heaven,

I call thy dreadful notice! If my heart

Deserves reproach, 'tis for, but not from Osman.

Osm. "What! does she yet presume to swear sincerity!"

Oh, boldness of unblushing perjury!
Had I not seen; had I not read such proof
Of her light falsehood as extinguish'd doubt,
I could not be a man, and not believe her.

Zar. Alas, my lord! what cruel fears have seiz'd
you? 380

What harsh, mysterious words were those I heard?

Osm. What fears should Osman feel, since Zara
loves him?

Zar. I cannot live and answer to your voice
In that reproachful tone; your angry eye
Trembles with fury while you talk of love.

Osm. Since Zara loves him!

Zar. Is it possible
Osman should disbelieve it?—Again, again
Your late-repent'd violence returns—
Alas! what killing frowns you dart against me!
Can it be kind? Can it be just to doubt me?

Osm. No! I can doubt no longer—You may retire.
[Exit Zara.]

Re-enter ORASMIN.

Orasmin, she's perfidious, even beyond
Her sex's undiscover'd power of seeming;
"She's at the topmost point of shameless artifice;
"An empress at deceiving! Soft and easy,
"Destroying like a plague, in calm tranquility:
"She's innocent she swears—so is the fire;

" It shines in harmless distance, bright and pleasing,
 " Consuming nothing till it first embraces." 400
 Say; hast thou chosen a slave?—Is he instructed?
 Hast to detect her vileness and my wrongs.

Oras. Punctual I have obey'd your whole com-
 mand :

But have you arm'd, my lord, your injur'd heart,
 With coldness and indifference! Can you hear,
 All painless and unmov'd the false one's shame?

Osm. Orasmin, I adore her more than ever.

Oras. My lord! my emperor! forbid it, Heaven!

Osm. I have discern'd a gleam of distant hope;

" This hateful Christian, the light growth of France,
 " Proud, young, vain, amorous, conceited, rash,
 " Has misconceiv'd some charitable glance,
 " And judg'd it love in Zara: he alone,
 " Then, has offended me. Is it her fault,
 " If those she charms are indiscreet and daring?
 " Zara, perhaps, expected not this letter;
 " And I, with rashness groundless as its writer's,
 " Took fire at my own fancy, and have wrong'd her."

Now hear me with attention—Soon as night
 Has thrown her welcome shadows o'er the palace;
 When this Nerestan, this ungrateful Christian, 421
 Shall lurk in expectation near our walls,
 Be watchful that our guards surprize and seize him;
 Then, bound in fetters and o'erwhelm'd with shame,
 Conduct the daring traitor to my presence:—
 But, above all, be sure you hurt not Zara;
 Mindful to what supreme excess I love. [*Exit Oras.*]

On this last trial all my hopes depend ;
Prophet, for once thy kind assistance lend,
Dispel the doubts that rack my anxious breast,
If Zara's innocent, thy Osman's blest. [Exit.

ACT V. SCENE I.

ZARA and SELIMA.

Zara.

SOOTH me no longer, with this vain desire ;
To a recluse like me, who dares henceforth
Presume admission ! — the seraglio's shut —
Barr'd and impassable — as death to time !
My brother ne'er must hope to see me more : —
How now ! what unknown slave accosts us here ?

Enter MELIDOR.

Mel. This letter, trusted to my hands, receive,
In secret witness I am wholly yours.

[Zara reads the letter.]

Sel. [*Aside.*] Thou everlasting ruler of the world !
Shed thy wish'd mercy on our hopeless tears ;
Redeem us from the hands of hated infidels,
And save my princess from the breast of Osman.

Zar. I wish, my friend, the comfort of your counsel.

Sel. Retire—you shall be call'd—wait near—Go,
leave us. [Exit Mel.]

Zar. Read this, and tell me what I ought to answer :
For I would gladly hear my brother's voice.

Sel. Say rather you would hear the voice of Heav'n.
'Tis not your brother calls you, but your God.

Zar. I know it, nor resist his awful will ;
Thou knowst that I have bound my soul by oath ; 20
But can I—ought I—to engage myself,
My brother, and the Christians, in this danger ?

Sel. 'Tis not their danger that alarms your fears ;
Your love speaks loudest to your shrinking soul ;
“ I know your heart of strength to hazard all,
“ But it has let in traitors, who surrender
“ On poor pretence of safety :—Learn at least,
“ To understand the weakness that deceives you :
“ You tremble to offend your haughty lover,
“ Whom wrongs and outrage but endear the more ;
“ Yes—you are blind to Osman's cruel nature,
“ That Tartar's fierceness, that obscures his boun-
ties ;”

This tyger, savage in his tenderness,
Courts with contempt, and threatens amidst softness ;
Yet, cannot your neglected heart efface
His fated, fix'd impression !

Zar. What reproach
Can I with justice make him ?——I, indeed,
Have given him cause to hate me !——
Was not his throne, was not his temple ready ? 40
Did he not court his slave to be a queen,
And have not I declin'd it ?——I who ought
To tremble, conscious of affronted power !
Have not I triumph'd o'er his pride and love ?
Seen him submit his own high will to mine,

And sacrifice his wishes to my weakness ?

Sel. Talk we no more of this unhappy passion :
What resolution will your virtue take ?

Zar. All things combine to sink me to despair :
From the seraglio death alone will free me.

I long to see the Christians' happy climes ;
Yet in the moment, while I form that prayer,
I sigh a secret wish to languish here.

How sad a state is mine ! my restless soul
All ign'rant what to do, or what to wish ?
My only perfect sense is that of pain.

Oh, guardian Heav'n ! protect my brother's life,
For I will meet him, and fulfil his prayer :

Then, when from Solyma's unfriendly walls,

His absence shall unbind his sister's tongue, 60

Osman shall learn the secret of my birth,

My faith unshaken, and my deathless love ;

He will approve my choice, and pity me.

I'll send my brother word he may expect me.

Call in the faithful slave—God of my fathers !

[*Exit Selima.*]

Let thy hand save me, and thy will direct.

Enter SELIMA and MELIDOR.

Go—tell the Christian who intrusted thee,
That Zara's heart is fix'd, nor shrinks at danger ;
And that my faithful friend will, at the hour,
Expect, and introduce him to his wish.

Away—the Sultan comes ; he must not find us.

[*Excunt Zara and Selima.*]

Enter OSMAN and ORASMIN.

Osm. Swifter, ye hours, move on ; my fury glows
Impatient, and would push the wheels of time.
How now ! What message dost thou bring ? Speak
boldly—

What answer gave she to the letter sent her ?

Mel. She blush'd and trembl'd, and grew pale, and
paus'd.

Then blush'd, and read it ; and again grew pale ;
And wept, and smil'd, and doubted, and resolv'd :
For after all this race of varied passions,
When she had sent me out, and call'd me back, 80
Tell him (she cry'd) who has intrusted thee,
That Zara's heart is fix'd, nor shrinks at danger ;
And that my faithful friend will, at the hour,
Expect, and introduce him to his wish.

Osm. Enough—begone—I have no ear for more.—
[*To the slave.*

Leave me, thou too, Orasmin.—Leave me, life,
[*To Orasmin*

For ev'ry mortal aspect moves my hate :
Leave me to my distraction——“ I grow mad,
“ And cannot bear the visage of a friend.
“ Leave me to rage, despair, and shame, and wrongs ;
“ Leave me to seek myself—and shun mankind.”
[*Exit Orasmin.*

Who am I ?—Heav'n ! Who am I ? What resolve I ?
Zara ! Nerestan ! sound these words like names
Decreed to join ?—Why pause I ?—Perish Zara——

Would I could tear her image from my heart :—

“ ’Twere happier not to live at all, than live

“ Her scorn, the sport of an ungrateful false one!

“ And sink the sov’reign in a woman’s property.”

Re-enter ORASMIN.

Orasmin !—Friend ! return, I cannot bear

This absence from thy reason : ’twas unkind, 100

’Twas cruel to obey me, thus distress’d,

And wanting pow’r to think, when I had lost thee.

How goes the hour ? Has he appear’d, this rival ?

Perish the shameful sound—This villain Christian !

Has he appear’d below ?

Oras. Silent and dark,

Th’ unbreathing world is hush’d, as if it heard,

And listened to your sorrows.

Osm. Oh, treach’rous night !

Thou lend’st thy ready veil to ev’ry treason,

And teeming mischiefs thrive beneath thy shade.

“ Orasmin, prophet, reason, truth, and love !

“ After such length of benefits, to wrong me!

“ How have I over-rated, how mistaken,

“ The merit of her beauty !—Did I not

“ Forget I was a monarch ? Did I remember

“ That Zara was a slave ?—I gave up all ;

“ Gave up tranquility, distinction, pride,

“ And fell the shameful victim of my love!

“ *Oras.* Sir, Sovereign, Sultan, my Imperial Master !

“ Reflect on your own greatness, 121

“ The distant provocation.”

Osm. Hark! Heardst thou nothing?

Oras. My lord!

Osm. A voice, like dying groans!

Oras. I listen, but can hear nothing.

Osm. Again!—look out—he comes——

Oras. Nor tread of mortal foot—nor voice I hear:
The still seraglio lies, profoundly plung'd
In death-like silence! nothing stirs.—The air
Is soft, as infant sleep, no breathing wing
Steals through the shadows, to awaken night.

Osm. Horrors a thousand times more dark than
these,
Benight my suff'ring soul—Thou dost not know
To what excess of tenderness I lov'd her:
I knew no happiness, but what she gave me,
Nor could have felt a mis'ry but for her!
Pity this weakness—mine are tears, Orasmin,
That fall not oft, nor lightly.—

Oras. Tears!—Oh, Heaven! 140

“*Osm.* The first which ever yet unmann'd my
eyes!

“ Oh! pity Zara—pity me—Orasmin,
“ These but forerun the tears of destin'd blood.”

Oras. Oh, my unhappy lord!—I tremble for you—

Osm. Do—tremble at my sufferings, at my love;
At my revenge too, tremble—for 'tis due,
And will not be deluded.

Oras. Hark! I hear
The steps of men, along the neighb'ring wall!

Osm. Fly—seize him—'tis Nerestan! Wait no chains,

But drag him down to my impatient eye.

[Exit Orasmin.]

Enter ZARA and SELIMA, in the dark.

Zar. Where art thou, Selima? Give me thy hand.
It is so dark, I tremble as I step,
With fears and startings, never felt till now!

Osm. Damnation! 'tis her voice! the well-known
sound,

That has so often charm'd me into baseness!

"Oh, the perfidious hypocrite!—she goes

"To meet th' inviting infidel!—now, now,"

[Drawing a dagger.]

Revenge, stand firm, and intercept his wishes;—

Revenge! On whom?—No matter—Earth and

Heaven

160

Would blush, should I forbear: now—Zara, now!

[Drops the Dagger.]

I must not, cannot strike, the starting steel,

Unwilling, flies my hand, and shuns to wound her.

Zar. This is the private path—come nearer, lead
me——

Are we not notic'd, thinkst thou?

Sel. Fear not, madam;

It cannot now be long, ere we shall meet him.

Osm. That word has given me back my ebbing
rage—

[Recovers the dagger.]

Zar. I walk in terror, and my heart forebodes.

Who's there?—Nerestan! Is it you?—O welcome—

ACT V.

ZARA.

81

Osm. [*Stabbing her.*] This to thy heart——'Tis not
the traitor meets thee,

'Tis the betray'd—who writes it in thy blood.

Zar. Oh, gracious Heaven! receive my parting
soul,

And take thy trembling servant to thy mercy——

[*Dies.*

Osm. Soul!—then revenge has reach'd thee—I will
now

Haste from this fatal place—I cannot leave her!

Whom did I strike? Was this the act of love?

Swallow me, earth!—She's silent—Zara's dead!

And should I live to see returning day, 79

'Twill shew me but her blood!—shew me left joyless,

In a wide, empty world, with nothing round me,

But penitence and pain—And yet, 'twas just:—

Hark!—Destiny has sent her lover to me,

To fill my vengeance, and restore my joy.

Enter ORASMIN with NERESTAN.

Approach, thou wretch! thou more than curs'd! come
near——

Thou who, in gratitude for freedom gain'd,

Hast giv'n me miseries beyond thy own!

Thou heart of hero with a traitor's soul!

“Go—reap thy due reward, prepare to suffer,

“Whate'er inventive malice can inflict,

“To make thee feel thy death, and perish slow.”

Are my commands obey'd?

Oras. All is prepar'd.

Osm. Thy wanton eyes look round, in search of her
Whose love, descending to a slave like thee,
From my dishonour'd hand rectiv'd her doom.

See! where she lies——

Ner. Oh, fatal, rash mistake!

Osm. Dost thou behold her, slave?

Ner. Unhappy sister!

200

Osm. Sister!——Didst thou say sister? If thou
didst,

Bless me with deafness, Heaven!

Ner. Tyrant! I did——

She was my sister——All that now is left thee,
Dispatch——From my distracted heart drain next
The remnant of the royal Christian blood:

Old Lusignan, expiring in my arms,
Sent his too wretched son, with his last blessing,
To his now murder'd daughter!——

Would I had seen the bleeding innocent!
I would have liv'd to speak to her in death;
Would have awaken'd in her languid heart,
A livelier sense of her abandon'd God:
That God, who left by her, forsook her too,
And gave the poor lost sufferer to thy rage.

Osm. Thy sister!——Lusignan her father——Selima!
Can this be true?—and have I wrong'd thee, Zara?

Sel. Thy love was all the cloud, 'twixt her and
Heav'n!

Osm. Be dumb——for thou art base, to add distraction

To my already more than bleeding heart.

220

And was thy love sincere ?—What then remains ?

Ner. Why should a tyrant hesitate on murder !
There now remains but mine, of all the blood
Which, through thy father's cruel reign and thine,
Has never ceas'd to stream on Syria's sands.
Restore a wretch to his unhappy race ;
Nor hope that torments, after such a scene,
Can force one feeble groan to feast thy anger.
I waste my fruitless words in empty air ;
The tyrant, o'er the bleeding wound he made,
Hangs his unmoving eye, and heeds not me.

Osm. Oh, Zara !——

Oras. Alas, my lord, return—whither would grief
Transport your gen'rous heart ?——This Christian
dog——

Osm. Take off his fetters, and observe my will :
To him, and all his friends, give instant liberty :
Pour a profusion of the richest gifts
On these unhappy Christians ; and when heap'd
With vary'd benefits, and charg'd with riches,
Give 'em safe conduct to the nearest port. 240

Oras. But, Sir——

Osm. Reply not, but obey.——
Fly—nor dispute thy master's last command,
Thy prince, who orders—and thy friend, who loves
thee !

Go—lose no time—farewell—begone—and thou !
Unhappy warrior—yet less lost than I——
Haste from our bloody land—and to thy own,
Convey this poor, pale object of my rage.

Thy king, and all his Christians, when they hear
Thy miseries, shall mourn 'em with their tears ;
But, if thou tell'st 'em mine, and tell'st 'em truly,
They who shall hate my crime, shall pity me.
Take, too, this poniard with thee, which my hand
Has stain'd with blood far dearer than my own ;
Tell 'em—with this I murder'd her I lov'd ;
The noblest and most virtuous among women !
The soul of innocence, and pride of truth :
Tell 'em I laid my empire at her feet :
Tell 'em I plung'd my dagger in her blood ;
Tell 'em, I so ador'd—and thus reveng'd her. 260

[*Stabs himself.*

Rev'rence this hero—and conduct him safe. [*Dies.*

Ner. Direct me, great inspirer of the soul !
How should I act, how judge in this distress ?
Amazing grandeur ! and detested rage !
Ev'n I, amidst my tears, admire this foe,
And mourn his death, who liv'd to give me woe.

[*Exeunt omnes.*



EPILOGUE.

*HERE, take a surfeit, Sirs, of being jealous,
And shun the pains that plague those Turkish fellows :
Where love and death join hands, their darts confounding :
Save us, good Heaven, from this new way of wounding.
Curs'd climate! where to cards a lone-left woman
Has only one of her black guards to summon!
Sighs, and sits mop'd, with her tame beast to gaze at:
And that cold treat, is all the game she plays at!
For, should she once some abler hand be trying,
Poniard's the word! and the first deal is—dying!*

*'Slife! shou'd the bloody whim get ground in Britain,
Where woman's freedom has such heights to sit on;
Dagger, provok'd, would bring on desolation :
And murder'd belles unpeople half the nation!—*

*Fain would I hope this play, to move compassion ;
And live to hunt suspicion out of fashion.—
Four motives strongly recommend the lover's
Hate of this weakness that our scene discovers.*

*First then —A woman will, or won't—depend on't:
If she will do't, she will :—and, there's an end on't.
But, if she won't—since safe and sound your trust is,
Fear is affront : and jealousy injustice.*

*Next,—he who bids his dear do what she pleases,
Blunts wedlock's edge ; and all its torture eases :
For—not to feel your suff' rings, is the same,
As not to suffer :—All the diff' rence—name.*

*Thirdly—The jealous husband wrongs his honour ;
No wife goes lame, without some hurt upon her :
And the malicious world will still be guessing,
Who oft dines out, dislikes her own cook's dressing.*

*Fourth, and lastly,—to conclude my lecture,
If you would fix the inconstant wife—respect her.
She who perceives her virtues over-rated,
Will fear to have the account more justly stated :
And borrowing, from her pride, the good wife's seeming,
Grow really such—to merit your esteeming.*

A
COMIC CHORUS;
OR,
INTERLUDES,

DESIGNED TO BE SUNG BETWEEN THE ACTS OF
ZARA.

PROLOGUE.

By Mr. BEARD, and Mrs. CLIVE, from opposite entrances.

She. *SO, Sir—you're a man of your word.*

He. *Who would break it, when summon'd by you?*

She. *Very fine that—but pray have you heard,
What it is you are summon'd to do?*

He. *Not a word—but expected to see
Something new in the musical way.*

She. *Why, this author has cast you and me,
As a Prologue, it seems, to his play.*

He. *What then is its tuneful name,
Robinhood of the Greenwood tree?
Or what good old ballad of fame
Has he built into tra-ge-dy?*

She. *Tho' he rails against songs, he thought fit,
Most gravely to urge and implore us,
In aid of his tragical wit,
To erect ourselves into a Chorus?* [Laughing.

H ij

He. *A Chorus! what's that—a composing
Of groans, to the rants of his madness?*

She. *No—he hinders the boxes from dozing,
By mixing some spirit with sadness.*

He. *So then—'tis our task, I suppose,
To sing sober sense into relish.*

*Strike up, at each tragical close,
And unheeded moral embellish.*

She. *'Twas the custom, you know, once in Greece,
And if here 'tis not witty, 'tis new.*

He. *Well then, when you find an act cease,*

[Turning to the Boxes.

Tremble ladies——

She. *And, gentlemen, too——*

[To the men.

If I give not the beaux good advice,

[Merrily.

Let me dwindle to recitative!

He. *Nor will I to the belles be more nice,
When I catch 'em, but here, to receive.*

She. *If there's ought to be learnt from the play,
I shall sit in a nook, here, behind,*

*Popping out in the good ancient way,
Now and then, with a piece of my mind.*

He. *But suppose, that no moral should rise,
Worth the ears of the brave or the fair!*

She. *Why, we'll then give the word—and advise——
Face about, and stand all as ye were.*

AFTER THE FIRST ACT.

Song in Duet.

He. THE Sultan's a bridegroom—the slaves are set free.

And none must presume to wear fetters but he !

Before honey-moon,

Love's fiddle's in tune ;

So we think (silly souls !) 'tis always to be :

For the man that is blind—how should he foresee !

She. I hate these hot blades, who so fiercely begin ;
To baulk a rais'd hope is a cowardly sin !

The maid that is wise, let her always procure

Rather a grave than a spirited woer :

What she loses at breakfast, at supper she'll win.

But your amorous violence never endures :

For to dance without doors

Is the way to be weary, before we get in.

He. Pray how does it happen, that passion so gay,

Blooms, fades, and falls away,

Like the rose of this morn, that at night must decay ?

Woman, I fear,

Does one thing appear,

But is found quite another, when look'd on too near.

She.

Ah—no—

Not—so—

'Tis the fault of you men, who, with flames of desire

Set your palates on fire,

And dream not, that eating—will appetite tire ;

So resolve in your heat,
 To do nothing, but eat,
 'Till, alas! on a sudden—you sleep o'er your meat!
 Therefore, learn, O ye fair!—

He. And, you lovers, take care——

She. That you trust not before-hand——

He. That you trust not at all.

She. Man was born to deceive.

He. Woman form'd to believe.

Both. Trust not one of us all!

For to stand on sure ground is the way not to fall.

AFTER THE SECOND ACT.

Mrs. CLIVE (sola) to a flute.

I.

OH, jealousy! thou bane of bleeding love?

Ah, how unhappy we!

Doom'd by the partial powers above,

Eternal slaves to thee!

Not more unstaid than lovers' hearts the wind!

This moment dying—and the next unkind.

Ah! wavering, weak desires of frail mankind!

With pleading passion ever to pursue,

Yet triumph, only to undo.

II.

Go to the deeps, below, thou joyless fiend,

And never rise again to sow despair!

Nor you, ye heedless fair, occasions lend,
To blast your blooming hopes, and bring on care.
Never conclude your innocence secure,
Prudence alone makes love endure.

*[As she is going off, he meets her, and pulls her back,
detaining her, while he sings what follows.]*

He. Ever, ever, doubt the fair in sorrow,
Mourning, as if they felt compassion :
Yet what they weep for to-day—to-morrow,
They'll be first to laugh into fashion.
None are betray'd, if they trust not the charmer ;
Jealousy guards the weak from falling ;
Would you never catch—you must oft alarm her,
Hearts to deceive is a woman's calling.

[After the song, he lets her go, and they join in a duet.]

She. Come let us be friends, and no longer abuse,
Condemn, and accuse,
Each other.

He. Would you have us agree, you must fairly confess,
The love we caress,
We smother.

She. I am loth to think that——

He. Yet, you know, it is true ;

She. Well—what if I do,
No matter.

He. Could you teach us a way to love on, without
strife ?

She. Suit the first part of life
To the latter.

He. 'Tis an honest advice; for when love is new blown,
 Gay colours are shown,
 Too glaring.

She. Then alas, for poor wives!—comes a blustering
 day,
 And blows 'em away,
 Most scaring!

AFTER THE THIRD ACT.

By Mr. BEARD alone.

MARK, oh, ye beauties!—gay, and young,
 Mark the painful woes and weeping,
 That from forc'd concealment sprung,
 Punish the sin of secret-keeping.
 Tell then—nor veil a willing heart,
 When the lover, lov'd alarms it;
 But—to sooth the pleasing smart,
 Whisper the glowing wish that warms it.
 She that would hide the gentle flame,
 Does but teach her hope to languish;
 She that boldly tells her aim,
 Flies from the path that leads to anguish.
 Not that too far your trust should go;
 All that you say—to all discover;
 All that you do—but two should know,
 One of 'em you, and one your lover.
[She meets him going off.]

She. Ah! man, thou wert always a traitor,
Thou giv'st thy advice to betray;
Ah! form'd for a rover by nature,
Thou leader of love the wrong way.
Would women let women advise them,
They could not so easily stray,
'Tis trusting to lovers supplies 'em
With will and excuse to betray.
She's safe, who, in guard of her passion,
Far, far, from confessing her pain,
Keeps silence, in spite of the fashion,
Nor suffers her eyes to explain.

AFTER THE FOURTH ACT.

Duet.

She. WELL, what do you think—of these sorrows
and joys,
These calms, and these whirlwinds—this silence and
noise?

Which love, in the bosom of man, employs?

He. For my part, would lovers be govern'd by me,
Not one of you women so wish'd-for should be.

Since here we a proof of your mischief see.

She. Why, what would you do to escape the distress?

He. I would do—I would do—by my soul I can't
guess—

She. Poor wretch, by my soul, I imagin'd no less.

Come, come—let me tell you, these tempests of love,
Did but blow up desire, its briskness to prove,
Which else would—you know—too lazily move.
Were women like logs of a make to lie still,
Men would sleep and grow dull—but our absolute will
Sets life all a whirling, like wheels in a mill.

He. Ambition in woman, like valour in man,
Tempt danger—from which they'd be safe if they ran:
And once get 'em in—get 'em out how you can.

She. Pray, what will you give me to teach you the
trick,
To keep your wife pleas'd, either healthy or sick?

He. The man who hits that, sure, must touch to the
quick!

She. Learn this—and depend on a life without pain,
Say nothing to vex her, yet let her complain;
Submit to your fate—and disturb not her reign:
Be mop'd when she's sad—and be pleas'd when she's
gay,

Believe her, and trust her—and give her—her way:
For want of this rule—there's the devil to pay.

Both. For want of this rule—there's the devil to pay.

VENICE PRESERVED.

OR,

A PLOT DISCOVERED.

A

TRAGEDY.

BY THOMAS OTWAY.

ADAPTED FOR

THEATRICAL REPRESENTATION,

AS PERFORMED AT THE

THEATRES - ROYAL
DRURY-LANE AND COVENT-GARDEN.

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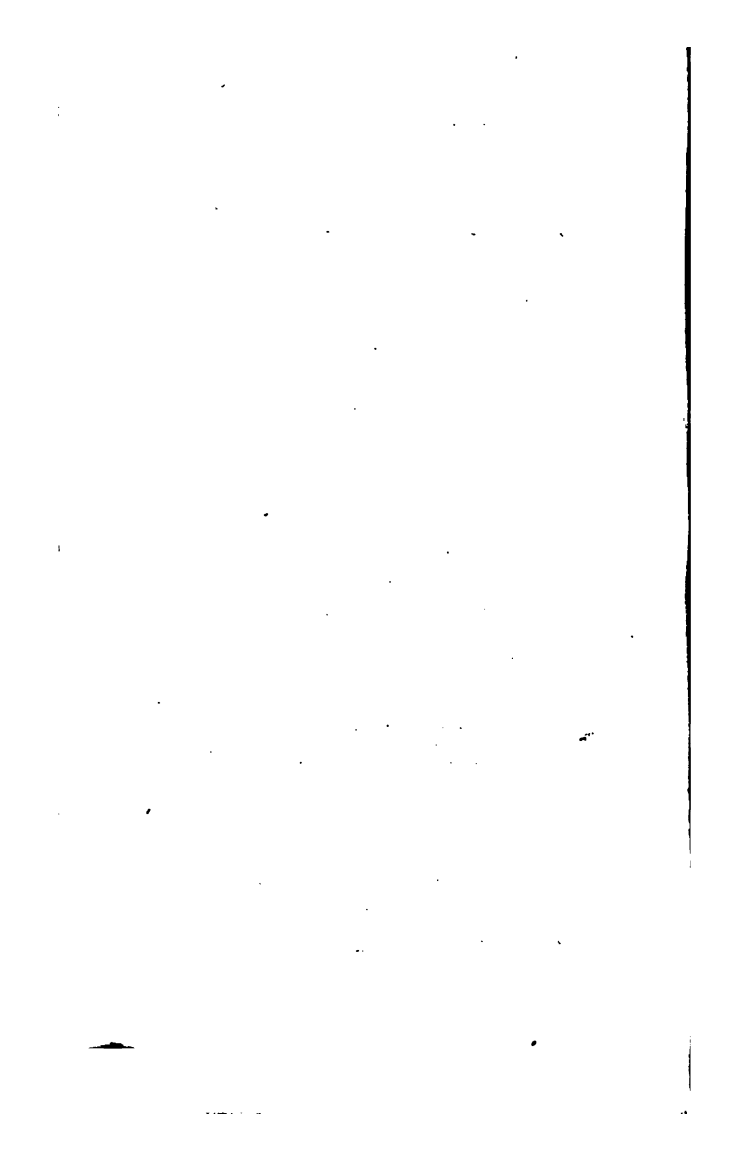
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M DCC XCI.



TO HER GRACE

THE

DUTCHESS OF PORTSMOUTH.

MADAM,

WERE it possible for me to let the world know, how entirely your Grace's goodness has devoted a poor man to your service: were there words enough in speech to express the mighty sense I have of your great bounty towards me; surely I should write and talk of it for ever: but your Grace has given me so large a theme, and laid so very vast a foundation, that Imagination wants stock to build upon it. I am as one dumb, when I would speak of it: and, when I strive to write, I want a scale of thought sufficient to comprehend the height of it. Forgive me, then, Madam, if (as a poor peasant once made a present of an apple to an Emperor) I bring this small tribute, the humble growth of my little garden, and lay it at your feet. Believe it is paid you with the utmost gratitude: believe, that, so long as I have thought to remember how very much I owe your very generous nature, I will ever have a heart that shall be grateful for it too. Your Grace, next Heaven, deserves it amply from me:

A ij

that gave me life, but on a hard condition, till your extended favour taught me to prize the gift, and took the heavy burthen it was clogged with from me, I mean hard fortune. When I had enemies, that with malicious power kept back and shaded me from those royal beams, whose warmth is all I have, or hope to live by; your noble pity and compassion found me, where I was cast backward from my blessing, down in the rear of fortune, called me up, placed me in the shine, and I have felt its comfort. You have in that restored me to my native right: for a steady faith, and loyalty to my Prince, was all the inheritance my father left me; and, however hardly my ill fortune deal with me, 'tis what I prize so well, that I never pawn'd it yet, and hope I shall never part with it. Nature and Fortune were certainly in league, when you were born; and as the first took care to give you beauty enough to enslave the hearts of all the world; so the other resolv'd to do its merit justice, that none but a monarch fit to rule the world should e'er possess it; and in it had an empire. The young prince you have given him, by his blooming virtues, early declares the mighty stock he came from: and as you have taken all the pious care of a dear mother, and a prudent guardian, to give him a noble and generous education; may it succeed according to his merits and your wishes: may he grow up to be a bulwark to his illustrious father, and a patron to his loyal subjects; with wisdom and learning to assist him,

whenever called to his councils ; to defend his right against the incroachment of republicans in his senates ; to cherish such men as shall be able to vindicate the royal cause ; that good and fit servants to the crown may never be lost, for want of a protector. May he have courage and conduct fit to fight his battles abroad, and terrify his rebels at home : and, that all these may be yet more sure, may he never, during the spring time of his years, when those growing virtues ought with care to be cherished, in order to their ripening, may he never meet with vicious natures, or the tongues of faithless, sordid, insipid flatterers, to blast 'em. To conclude, may he be as great as the hand of Fortune (with his honour) shall be able to make him ; and may your Grace, who are so good a mistress, and so noble a patroness, never meet with a less grateful servant, than,

Madam,

Your Grace's

Entirely devoted Creature,

THO. OTWAY.

THOMAS OTWAY.

LITTLE is with any certainty known of the great Author of *VENICE PRESERVED*.—In the licentious days of Charles II. it is believed neither the *virtues* nor the *vices* of OTWAY were sufficiently prominent to distinguish him.

His father, Mr. HUMPHREY OTWAY, was the Rector of *Wolbeding* in Sussex—THOMAS the poet was born on the 3d of March, 1651. He was first sent to *Wickeham* School, and thence removed to Christ-Church, Oxford, of which he became a Commoner in 1669.

On leaving the University, the *histrionic* frenzy possessed him—He found the bent of his mind led him to the Theatre, but he mistook the part he was to perform there: instead of exciting emotions himself upon a stage, he was to furnish others with a *cue for passion*, as long as the language he spoke should exist. He made as an

Actor but one attempt, and in that he is said to have failed.

The army and Otway had as little congenial between them—He served in Flanders, but, versatile and facile, he soon became disgusted, and at length resolved to write for the Players—How well he succeeded, is impressed upon every heart.

Imprudence, however, is said to have left him never above want, and sometimes, it is reported, had plunged him into all its severities. We hear continually an idle reproach upon the ingratitude of an age which can suffer the indigence of Genius. But it should be considered that, for the most part, such dilemmas are voluntary inflictions, and that he has slender claims upon the sympathy of men, whom calamity cannot make wise, and whom pride prevents from soliciting relief.

OTWAY died in 1685; but, it is hoped, the wretched fate said to have attended him is fictitious—Nothing, however, can with any certainty be advanced respecting his *end*.

Few of the Professors of Literature offer so striking an example as Otway of the sublime

pre-eminence, and indiscreet abasement of
GENIUS.

His productions are as follow :—

Alcibiades,	Caius Marius,
Don Carlos,	Orphan,
Titus and Berenice,	Soldier's Fortune,
Cheats of Scapin,	Venice Preserved,
Friendship in Fashion,	Atheist.

VENICE PRESERVED;

OR,

A PLOT DISCOVERED.

Is a play evidently the result of acute remark upon the influence of passion on life. The Author seems to have consulted nature in his own mind, and unfortunately his own mind was corrupt.

Hence his characters, except indeed *Belvidera*, excite little sympathy at their fate.—The Traitor to his Country expires upon the wheel, and the Betrayer of his Friend is the *slayer of himself*.

In the works of some dramatists, there is danger lest Vice should wear the wreath of Virtue from the fascination of specious qualities—it is thus in the *School for Scandal*; where the character of Charles is a seducing *poison to our blood*.—Otway's Rascals are, however, sufficiently despised—PIERRE is sunken by cruel ambition—JAFFIER by meanness unmanly and contemptible. On the side of the *amor patriæ* he is paralytic—he can support the idea of destroying his Country, but poverty, the importunities of a wife, or

the reflections of treachery to a friend, agonize him with compunction and hurry him to despair.

BELVIDERA, unhappy, duteous, tender, and virtuous, claims our full commiseration, and claims it *alone*.

PROLOGUE.

*IN these distracted times, when each man dreads
The bloody stratagems of busy heads :
Whence we had fear'd three years we know not what,
'Till witnesses began to die o' th' rot ;
What made our poet meddle with a plot ?
Was't that he fancy'd for the very sake
And name of plot, his trifling play might take ?
For there's not in't one inch-board evidence ;
But 'tis, he says, to reason plain and sense ;
And that he thinks a plausible defence.
Were truth by sense and reason to be try'd,
Sure all our swearers might be laid aside.
No ; of such tools our author has no need,
To make his plot, or make his play succeed ;
He of Black Bills has no prodigious tales,
Or Spanish pilgrims cast ashore in Wales :
Here's not one murder'd magistrate, at least,
Kept rank, like ven'son for a city feast,
Grown four days stiff, the better to prepare
And fit his pliant limbs to ride in chair.
Yet here's an army rais'd, tho' under ground,
But no man seen, nor one commission found :
Here is a traytor too, that's very old,
Turbulent, subtle, mischievous, and bold.*

*Bloody, revengeful, and—to crown his part,
Loves fumbling with a wench with all his heart :
'Till, after having many changes past,
In spite of age (thanks t' heav'n) is hang'd at last ;
Next is a senator that keeps a whore,
In Venice none a higher office bore,
To lewdness ev'ry night the leacher ran ;
Shew me, all London, such another man ;
Match him at Mother Creswell's, if you can.
O Poland ! Poland ! had it been thy lot
T' have heard in time of this Venetian plot,
Thou surely chosen hadst one king from thence,
And honour'd them, as thou hast England since.*

Dramatis Personæ.

DRURY - LANE.

Men.

DUKE of VENICE	-	-	-	Mr. Chaplin.
PRIULI	-	-	-	Mr. Aickin.
BEDAMAR	-	-	-	Mr. R. Palmer.
JAFFIER	-	-	-	Mr. Kemble.
PIERRE	-	-	-	Mr. Bensley.
RENAULT	} Conspirators {	}		Mr. Packer.
ELLIOTT				Mr. Fawcett.
SPINOSA				Mr. Benson.
THEODORE				Mr. Alfred.

Woman.

BELVIDERA	-	-	-	Mrs. Siddons.
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COVENT - GARDEN.

Men.

DUKE of VENICE	-	-	-	Mr. Thompson.
PRIULI	-	-	-	Mr. Hull.
BEDAMAR	-	-	-	Mr. Davies.
JAFFIER	-	-	-	Mr. Holman.
PIERRE	-	-	-	Mr. Harley.
RENAULT	} Conspirators {	}		Mr. W. Powell.
ELLIOTT				Mr. Macready.
SPINOSA				Mr. Cubit.
THEODORE				Mr. Reeves.

Woman.

BELVIDERA	-	-	-	Mrs. Esten.
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Two Women, attendants on Belvidera.

The Council of ten.

Officer, Guard, Friar, Executioner, and Rabble.



VENICE PRESERVED.

ACT I. SCENE I.

A Street in Venice. Enter PRIULI and JAFFIER.

Priuli.

No more! I'll hear no more! Begone and leave me.

Jaf. Not hear me! By my suffering but you shall!
My lord, my lord! I'm not that abject wretch
You think me. Patience! where's the distance throws
Me back so far, but I may boldly speak
In right, tho' proud oppression will not hear me?

Pri. Have you not wrong'd me?

Jaf. Could my nature e'er
Have brook'd injustice, or the doing wrongs,
I need not now thus low have bent myself
To gain a hearing from a cruel father.
Wrong'd you!

Pri. Yes, wrong'd me! In the nicest point,
The honour of my house, you've done me wrong,
You may remember (for I now will speak,
And urge its baseness) when you first came home
From travel, with such hopes as made you look'd on,
By all men's eyes, a youth of expectation;

B ij

Pleas'd with your growing virtue, I receiv'd you ;
Court'd, and sought to raise you to your merits : 20
My house my table, nay, my fortune too,
My very self was yours ; you might have us'd me
To your best service ; like an open friend
I treated, trusted you, and thought you mine :
When, in requital of my best endeavours,
You treacherously practis'd to undo me ;
Seduc'd the weakness of my age's darling,
My only child, and stole her from my bosom.
Oh Belvidera ! ,

Jaf. 'Tis to me you owe her :
Childless you had been else, and in the grave
Your name extinct ; no more Priuli heard of.
You may remember, scarce five years are past,
Since in your brigantine you sail'd to see
The Adriatick wedded by our Duke ;
And I was with you : your unskilful pilot
Dash'd us upon a rock ; when to your boat
You made for safety : enter'd first your self ;
Th' affrighted Belvidera following next,
As she stood trembling on the vessel's side,
Was, by a wave, wash'd off into the deep ;
When instantly I plung'd into the sea,
And buffeting the billows to her rescue,
Redeem'd her life with half the loss of mine.
Like a rich conquest, in one hand I bore her,
And with the other dash'd the saucy waves,
That throng'd and press'd to rob me of my prize.
I brought her, gave her to your despairing arms :

Indeed you thank'd me ; but a nobler gratitude
 Rose in her soul : for from that hour she lov'd me,
 'Till for her life she paid me with herself.

Pri. You stole her from me ; like a thief you stole
 her,

At dead of night ! that cursed hour you chose
 To rife me of all my heart held dear.
 May all your joys in her prove false, like mine ;
 A sterile fortune, and a barren bed,
 Attend you both ; continual discord make
 Your days and nights bitter and grievous : still
 May the hard hand of a vexatious need
 Oppress and grind you ; till at last you find 60
 The curse of disobedience all your portion.

Jaf. Half of your curse you have bestow'd in vain ;
 Heav'n has already crown'd our faithful loves
 With a young boy, sweet as his mother's beauty :
 May he live to prove more gentle than his grandsire,
 And happier than his father.

Pri. Rather live
 To bait thee for his bread, and din your ears
 With hungry cries ; whilst his unhappy mother
 Sits down and weeps in bitterness of want.

Jaf. You talk as if 'twould please you.

Pri. 'Twould, by heav'n !

" Once she was dear indeed ; the drops that fell
 " From my sad heart, when she forgot her duty,
 " The fountain of my life was not so precious—
 " But she is gone, and, if I am a man,
 " I will forget her."

Jaf. Would I were in my grave ?

Pri. And she too with thee :

For, living here, you're but my curs'd remembrancers.
I once was happy. 81

Jaf. You use me thus, because you know my soul
Is fond of Belvidera. You perceive
My life feeds on her, therefore thus you treat me.

Oh ! could my soul ever have known satiety ;
Were I that thief, the doer of such wrongs
As you upbraid me with, what hinders me
But I might send her back to you with contumely,
And court my fortune where she would be kinder ?

Pri. You dare not do't.

Jaf. Indeed, my Lord, I dare not.
My heart, that awes me, is too much my master :
Three years are past, since first our vows were plighted,
During which time, the world must bear me witness,
I've treated Belvidera like your daughter,
The daughter of a senator of Venice :
Distinction, place, attendance, and observance,
Due to her birth, she always has commanded.
Out of my little fortune I've done this ;
Because (tho' hopeless e'er to win your nature)
The world might see I lov'd her for herself ;
Not as the heiress of the great Priuli.

Pri. No more.

Jaf. Yes, all, and then adieu for ever.
There's not a wretch, that lives on common charity,
But's happier than me : for I have known
The luscious sweets of plenty ; every night

Have slept with soft content about my head,
And never wak'd, but to a joyful morning :
Yet now must fall, like a full ear of corn,
Whose blossom 'scap'd, yet's wither'd in the ripening.

Pri. Home, and be humble ; study to retrench ;
Discharge the lazy vermin of thy hall,
Those pageants of thy folly :
Reduce the glitt'ring trappings of thy wife
To humble weeds, fit for thy little state :
Then, to some suburb cottage both retire ;
Drudge to feed loathsome life ; get brats and starve—
Home, home, I say.—— [Exit.

Jaf. Yes, if my heart would let me——
This proud, this swelling heart : home I would go,
But that my doors are hateful to my eyes,
Fill'd and damm'd up with gaping creditors.
“ Watchful as fowlers when their game will spring.”
I've now not fifty ducats in the world,
Yet still I am in love, and pleas'd with ruin,
Oh! Belvidera! Oh! she is my wife——
And we will bear our wayward fate together,
But ne'er know comfort more.

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. My friend, good morrow.
How fares the honest partner of my heart ?
What, melancholy! not a word to spare me?

Jaf. I'm thinking, Pierre, how that damn'd starv-
ing quality,
Call'd honesty, got footing in the world.

Pier. Why, powerful villany first set it up,
For its own ease and safety. Honest men
Are the soft easy cushions on which knaves
Repose and fatten. Were all mankind villains,
They'd starve each other; lawyers would want practice,

Cut-throats rewards: each man would kill his
brother

Himself; none would be paid or hang'd for murder.
Honesty! 'twas a cheat invented first 142
To bind the hands of bold deserving rogues,
That fools and cowards might sit safe in power.
And lord it uncontroul'd above their betters.

Jaf. Then honesty is but a notion?

Pier. Nothing else;
Like wit, much talk'd of, not to be defin'd?
He that pretends to most, too, has least share in't.
'Tis a ragged virtue: Honesty! no more on't.

Jaf. Sure thou art honest?

Pier. So, indeed, men think me;
But they are mistaken, Jaffier: I am a rogue
As well as they;
A fine, gay, bold-fac'd villain as thou seest me.
'Tis true, I pay my debts, when they're contracted;
I steal from no man; would not cut a throat
To gain admission to a great man's purse,
Or a whore's bed; I'd not betray my friend
To get his place or fortune; I scorn to flatter 160
A blown-up fool above me, or crush the wretch beneath me;

Yet, Jaffier, for all this I am a villain.

Jaf. A villain!

Pier. Yes, a most notorious villain;

To see the sufferings of my fellow-creatures.

And own myself a man: to see our senators

Cheat the deluded people with a shew

Of liberty, which yet they ne'er must taste of.

They say, by them our hands are free from fetters;

Yet whom they please they lay in basest bonds;

Bring whom they please to infamy and sorrow;

Drive us, like wrecks, down the rough tide of power,

Whilst no hold's left to save us from destruction.

All that bear this are villains, and I one,

Not to rouse up at the great call of nature,

And check the growth of these domestic spoilers,

That make us slaves, and tell us, 'tis our charter.

Jaf. "Oh, Aquilina! Friend to lose such beauty.

"The dearest purchase of thy noble labours!

"She was thy right by conquest, as by love. 180

Pier. "Oh! Jaffier! I had so fix'd my heart upon
her,

"That, wheresoe'er I fram'd a scheme of life,

"For time to come, she was my only joy,

"With which I wish'd to sweeten future cares:

"I fancy'd pleasures; none but one that loves.

"And doats as I did, can imagine like 'em:

"When in th' extremity of all these hopes,

"In the most charming hour of expectation,

"Then, when our eager wishes soar'd the highest,

"Ready to stoop and grasp the lovely game,

" A haggard owl, a worthless kite of prey,
" With his foul wings, sail'd in, and spoil'd my quarry,
Jaf. " I know the wretch, and scorn him as thou
 hat'st him.

Pier. " Curse on the common good that's so pro-
 tected,

" Where every slave, that heaps up wealth enough
" To do much wrong, becomes the lord of right !
" I, who believ'd no ill could e'er come near me,
" Found in th' embraces of my Aquilina
" A wretched, old, but itching senator ;
" A wealthy fool, that had bought out my title ; too
" A rogue that uses beauty like a lamb-skin,
" Barely to keep him warm ; that filthy cuckoo too
" Was, in my absence, crept into my nest,
" And spoiling all my brood of noble pleasure.

Jaf. " Didst thou not chase him thence ?

Pier. " I did, and drove

" The rank old bearded Hirco stinking home.
" The matter was complain'd of in the senate,
" I summon'd to appear, and censur'd basely,
" For violating something they call'd privilege——
" This was the recompence of all my service.
" Would I'd been rather beaten by a coward !
" A soldier's mistress, Jaffier, is his religion ;
" When that's profan'd, all other ties are broken :
" That even dissolves all former bonds of service ;
" And from that hour I think myself as free
" To be the foe, as e'er the friend of Venice——
" Nay, dear revenge, whene'er thou call'st I'm ready."

Jaf. I think no safety can be here for virtue,
And grieve, my friend, as much as thou, to live 220
In such a wretched state as this of Venice,
Where all agree to spoil the public good;
And villains fatten with the brave man's labours.

Pier. We've neither safety, unity, nor peace,
For the foundation's lost of common good;
Justice is lame, as well as blind, amongst us;
The laws (corrupted to their ends that make 'em)
Serve but for instruments of some new tyranny,
That every day starts up, t'enslave us deeper.
Now could this glorious cause but find out friends
To do it right, Oh, Jaffier! then might'st thou
Not wear these seals of woe upon thy face;
The proud Priuli should be taught humanity,
And learn to value such a son as thou art.

I dare not speak, but my heart bleeds this moment.

Jaf. Curs'd be the cause, tho' I thy friend be part
on't :

Let me partake the troubles of thy bosom,
For I am us'd to mis'ry, and perhaps
May find a way to sweeten 't to thy spirit.

Pier. Too soon 'twill reach thy knowledge——

Jaf. Then from thee 241

Let it proceed. There's virtue in thy friendship,
Would make the saddest tale of sorrow pleasing,
Strengthen my constancy, and welcome ruin.

Pier. Then thou art ruin'd !

Jaf. That I long since knew ;
I and ill fortune have been long acquainted.

Pier. I pass'd this very moment by thy doors,
And found them guarded by a troop of villains;
The sons of public rapine were destroying.
They told me, by the sentence of the law,
They had commission to seize all thy fortune :
Nay, more, Priuli's cruel hand had sign'd it.
Here stood a ruffian with a horrid face,
Lording it o'er a pile of massy plate,
Tumbled into a heap for public sale ;
There was another making villanous jests
At thy undoing : he had ta'en possession
Of all thy ancient, most domestic ornaments,
Rich hangings intermix'd and wrought with gold ;
The very bed, which on thy wedding-night
Receiv'd thee to the arms of Belvidera,
The scene of all thy joys was violated
By the coarse hands of filthy dungeon villains,
And thrown amongst the common lumber.

Jaf. Now thank heaven——

Pier. Thank heaven ! for what ?

Jaf. That I'm not worth a ducat.

Pier. Curse thy dull stars, and the worse fate of
Venice,

Where brothers, friends, and fathers, all are false ;
Where there's no truth, no trust ; where innocence
Stoops under vile oppression, and vice lords it.
Hadst thou but seen, as I did, how at last
Thy beauteous Belvidera, like a wretch
That's doom'd to banishment, came weeping forth,
“ Shining thro' tears, like April-suns in showers,

“ That labour to o’ercome the cloud that loads ’em ;
 Whilst two young virgins, on whose arms she lean’d,
 Kindly look’d up, and at her grief grew sad,
 As if they catch’d the sorrows that fell from her ; 280
 Ev’n the lewd rabble, that were gather’d round
 To see the sight, stood mute when they beheld her ;
 Govern’d their roaring throats, and grumbled pity ;
 I could have hugg’d the greasy rogues : they pleas’d
 me.

Jaf. I thank thee for this story, from my soul ;
 Since now I know the worst that can befall me.
 Ah, Pierre ! I have a heart that could have borne
 The roughest wrong my fortune could have done me ;
 But when I think what Belvidera feels,
 The bitterness her tender spirit tastes of,
 I own myself a coward : bear my weakness :
 If throwing thus my arms about thy neck,
 I play the boy, and blubber in thy bosom.
 Oh ! I shall drown thee with my sorrows.

Pier. Burn,
 First, burn and level Venice to thy ruin.
 What ! starvè, like beggars’ brats, in frosty weather,
 Under a hedge, and whine ourselves to death !
 Thou or thy cause, shall never want assistance,
 Whilst I have blood or fortune fit to serve thee :
 Command my heart, thou’rt every way its master.

Jaf. No, there’s a secret pride in bravely dying.

Pier. Rats die in holes and corners, dogs run mad ;
 Man knows a braver remedy for sorrow :
 Revenge, the attribute of gods ; they stamp’d it,

With their great image, on our natures. Die!
Consider well the cause, that calls upon thee :
And, if thou'rt base enough, die then. Remember,
Thy Belvidera suffers; Belvidera !
Die—damn first—What ! be decently interr'd
In a church-yard, and mingle thy brave dust
With stinking rogues, that rot in winding-sheets,
Surfeit-slain fools, the common dung o' th' soil !

Jaf. Oh !

Pier. Well said, out with't, swear a little—

Jaf. Swear ! By sea and air; by earth, by Heav'n
and hell,

I will revenge my Belvidera's tears.

Hark thee, my friend—Priuli—is—a senator.

Pier. A dog.

Jaf. Agreed.

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Pier. Shoot him.

Jaf. With all my heart.

No more ; where shall we meet at night ?

Pier. I'll tell thee ;

On the Rialto, every night at twelve,

I take my evening's walk of meditation ;

There we two will meet, and talk of precious

Mischief—

Jaf. Farewel.

Pier. At twelve.

Jaf. At any hour; my plagues

Will keep me waking.

[Exit Pierre.]

Tell me why, good Heaven,

Thou mad'st me what I am, with all the spirit,

Aspiring thoughts, and elegant desires,
That fill the happiest man? Ah, rather, why
Didst thou not form me sordid as my fate,
Base-minded, dull, and fit to carry burthens?
Why have I sense to know the curse that's on me?
Is this just dealing, Nature?—Belvidera!

Enter BELVIDERA.

Poor Belvidera!

Bel. Lead me, lead me, my virgins,
To that kind voice. My lord, my love, my refuge!
Happy my eyes, when they behold thy face!
My heavy heart will leave its doleful beating
At sight of thee, and bound with sprightly joys.
Oh smile! as when our loves were in their spring,
And cheer my fainting soul.

Jaf. As when our loves
Were in their spring! Has then our fortune chang'd?
Art thou not Belvidera, still the same,
Kind, good, and tender, as my arms first found thee?
If thou art alter'd, where shall I have harbour?
Where ease my loaded heart? Oh! where complain?

Bel. Does this appear like change, or love decaying,
When thus I throw myself into thy bosom,
With all the resolution of strong truth!
Beats not my heart, as 'twould alarum thine
To a new charge of bliss?—I joy more in thee,
Than did thy mother, when she hugg'd thee first,
And bless'd the Gods for all her travail past.

Jaf. Can there in woman be such glorious faith?
Sure all ill stories of thy sex are false!
Oh woman! lovely woman! Nature made thee
To temper man: we had been brutes without you!
Angels are painted fair to look like you:
There's in you all that we believe of Heaven;
Amazing brightness, purity and truth,
Eternal joy, and everlasting love.

Bel. If love be treasure, we'll be wondrous rich;
I have so much, my heart will surely break with't:
Vows can't express it. When I would declare
How great's my joy, I'm dumb with the big thought;
I swell, and sigh, and labour with my longing.
O! lead me to some desert wide and wild,
Barren as our misfortunes, where my soul
May have its vent, where I may tell aloud
To the high Heavens, and ev'ry list'ning planet,
With what a boundless stock my bosom's fraught;
Where I may throw my eager arms about thee, 380
Give loose to love, with kisses kindling joy,
And let off all the fire that's in my heart.

Jaf. Oh, Belvidera! doubly I'm a beggar:
Undone by fortune, and in debt to thee.
Want, worldly want, that hungry meagre fiend,
Is at my heels, and chases me in view.
Canst thou bear cold and hunger? Can these limbs,
Fram'd for the tender offices of love,
Endure the bitter gripes of smarting poverty?
When banish'd by our miseries abroad
(As suddenly we shall be) to seek out
In some far climate, where our names are strangers,

For charitable succour ; wilt thou then,
When in a bed of straw we shrink together,
And the bleak winds shall whistle round our heads ;
Wilt thou then talk thus to me ? Wilt thou then
Hush my cares thus, and shelter me with love ?

Bel. Oh ! I will love thee, even in madness love
thee ;

Tho' my distracted senses should forsake me,
I'd find some intervals, when my poor heart 400
Should 'swage itself, and be let loose to thine.
Tho' the bare earth be all our resting-place,
Its roots our food, some clift our habitation,
I'll make this arm a pillow for thine head ;
And, as thou sighing ly'st, and swell'd with sorrow,
Creep to thy bosom, pour the balm of love
Into thy soul, and kiss thee to thy rest ;
Then praise our God, and watch thee till the morning.

Jaf. Hear this, you Heav'ns ! and wonder how you
made her :

Reign, reign, ye monarchs that divide the world,
Busy rebellion ne'er will let you know
Tranquility and happiness like mine !
Like gaudy ships th' obsequious billows fall,
And rise again, to lift you in your pride ;
They wait but for a storm, and then devour you ;
I, in my private bark already wreck'd,
Like a poor merchant driven to unknown land,
That had by chance pack'd up his choicest treasure
In one dear casket, and sav'd only that ; 419
Since I must wander further on the shore,

Thus hug my little, but my precious store,
Resolv'd to scorn and trust my fate no more. [*Exeunt.*]

ACT II. SCENE I.

“ *Enter PIERRE and AQUILINA.*

“ *Aquilina.*

“ By all thy wrongs, thou’rt dearer to my arms
“ Than all the wealth of Venice. Pr’ythee stay,
“ And let us love to-night.”

Pier. No: there’s fool,

“ There’s fool about thee. When a woman sells
“ Her flesh to fools, her beauty’s lost to me;
“ They leave a taint, a sully—where they’ve pass’d;
“ There’s such a baneful quality about ’em,
“ E’en spoils complexions with their nauseousness;
“ They infect all they touch: I cannot think
“ Of tasting any thing a fool has pall’d.

“ *Aqui.* I loath and scorn that fool thou mean’st, as
much

“ Or more than thou canst; but the beast has gold,
“ That makes him necessary; power too,
“ To qualify my character, and poise me
“ Equal with peevish virtue, that beholds
“ My liberty with envy. In their hearts
“ They’re loose as I am; but an ugly power
“ Sits in their faces, and frights pleasure from them.”

“ *Pier.* Much good may't do you, madam, with
your senator. 20

“ *Aqui.* My senator! Why, canst thou think that
wretch

“ E'er fill'd thy Aquilina's arms with pleasure?

“ Think'st thou, because I sometimes give him leave

“ To foil himself at what he is unfit for;

“ Because I force myself t'endure and suffer him,

“ Think'st thou, I love him? No, by all the joys

“ Thou ever gav'st me, his presence is my penance.

“ The worst thing an old man can be 's a lover,

“ A mere *memento mori* to poor woman.

“ I never lay by his decrepid side,

“ But all that night I ponder on my grave.

“ *Pier.* Would he were well sent thither.

“ *Aqui.* That's my wish too:

“ For then, my Pierre, I might have cause, with
pleasure,

“ To play the hypocrite. Oh! how I could weep

“ Over the dying dotard, and kiss him too,

“ In hopes to smother him quite; then, when the time

“ Was come to pay my sorrows at his funeral,

“ (For he has already made me heir to treasures

“ Would make me out-act a real widow's whining)

“ How could I frame my face to fit my mourning!

“ With wringing hands attend him to his grave;

“ Fall swooning on his hearse; take mad possession

“ E'en of the dismal vault, where he lay buried;

“ There, like th' Ephesian matron, dwell, till thou,

“ My lovely soldier, com'st to my deliverance;

" Then, throwing up my veil, with open arms

" And laughing eyes, run to new-dawning joy.

" *Pier.* No more : I've friends to meet me here to-night,

" And must be private: As you prize my friendship,

" Keep up your cockcomb ; let him not pry, nor listen ;

" Nor frisk about the house, as I have seen him,

" Like a tame mumping squirrel with a bell on ;

" Curs will be abroad to bite him, if you do.

" *Aqui.* What friends to meet ! Mayn't I be of your council ?

" *Pier.* How ! a woman ask questions out of bed !

Go to your senator ; ask him what passes

" Amongst his brethren ; he'll hide nothing from you :

" But pump me not for politics. No more !

" Give order, that whoever in my name 60

" Comes here, receive admittance. So good night.

" *Aqui.* Must we ne'er meet again ! embrace no more ?

" Is love so soon and utterly forgotten ?

" *Pier.* As you henceforward treat your fool, I'll think on't.

" *Aqui.* Curs'd be all fools—I die, if he forsakes me ;

" And how to keep him, Heaven or hell instruct me."

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE II.

The Rialto. Enter JAFFIER.

Jaf. I'm here; and thus, the shades of night around
me,

I look as if all hell were in my heart,
And I in hell. Nay surely 'tis so with me!—
For every step I tread, methinks some fiend
Knocks at my breast, and bids me not be quiet.
I've heard how desperate wretches, like myself,
Have wander'd out at this dead time of night,
To meet the foe of mankind in his walk.
Sure I'm so curs'd that, tho' of Heav'n forsaken,
No minister of darkness cares to tempt me.
Hell, hell! why sleep'st thou?

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. Sure I've staid too long:
The clock has struck, and I may lose my proselyte.
Speak, who goes there?

Jaf. A dog, that comes to howl
At yonder moon. What's he, that asks the question?

Pier. A friend to dogs, for they are honest crea-
tures,
And ne'er betray their masters: never fawn
On any that they love not. Well met, friend:
Jaffier!

Jaf. The same. "O Pierre, thou'rt come in season,
"I was just going to pray.

Pier. " Ah; that's mechanic ;
" Priests make a trade on't, and yet starve by't, too.
" No praying ; it spoils business, and time's precious.
Where's Belvidera ?——

Jaf. For a day or two
I've lodg'd her privately, till I see farther
What fortune will do for me. Pr'ythee, friend,
If thou would'st have me fit to hear good counsel,
Speak not of Belvidera——

Pier. Not of her !

Jaf. Oh, no !

Pier. Not name her ? May be I wish her well. 100

Jaf. Whom well ?

Pier. Thy wife; thy lovely Belvidera.
I hope a man may wish his friend's wife well,
And no harm done.

Jaf. Y'are merry, Pierre.

Pier. I am so :

Thou shalt smile too, and Belvidera smile :
We'll all rejoice. Here's something to buy pins ;
Marriage is chargeable. [*Gives him a purse.*]

Jaf. I but half wish'd
To see the devil, and he's here already. Well !
What must this buy ? Rebellion, murder, treason ?
Tell me, which way I must be damn'd for this.

Pier. When last we parted, we'd no qualms like
these,
But entertain'd each other's thoughts like men
Whose souls were well acquainted. Is the world
Reform'd since our last meeting ? What new miracles

Have happen'd ? Has Priuli's heart relented ?
Can he be honest ?

Jaf. Kind Heav'n, let heavy curses
Gall his old age ; cramps, aches rack his bones,
And bitterest disquiet ring his heart.

“ Oh ! let him live, till life become his burden :

“ Let him groan under't long, linger an age

“ In the worst agonies and pangs of death,

“ And find its ease, but late.”

Pier. Nay, could'st thou not
As well, my friend, have stretch'd the curse to all
The senate round, as to one single villain ?

Jaf. But curses stick not : Could I kill with cursing,
By Heaven I know not thirty heads in Venice
Should not be blasted. Senators should rot
Like dogs on dunghills : “ But their wives and
daughters

“ Die of their own diseases.” Oh ! for a curse
To kill with !

Pier. Daggers, daggers are much better.

Jaf. Ha !

Pier. Daggers.

Jaf. But where are they ?

Pier. Oh ! a thousand

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May be dispos'd of, in honest hands, in Venice.

Jaf. Thou talk'st in clouds.

Pier. But yet a heart, half wrong'd
As thine has been, would find the meaning, Jaffier.

Jaf. A thousand daggers, all in honest hands !
And have not I a friend will stick one here !

We'll do the business, and ne'er fast and pray for't ;
Openly act a deed the world shall gaze
With wonder at, and envy when 'tis done.

Jaf. For liberty !

Pier. For liberty, my friend.

Thou shalt be freed from base Priuli's tyranny,
And thy sequester'd fortunes heal'd again : 180
I shall be free from those opprobrious wrongs,
That press me now, and bend my spirit downward ;
All Venice free, and every growing merit
Succeed to its just right : fools shall be pull'd
From wisdom's seat : those baleful unclean birds,
Those lazy owls, who, perch'd near fortune's top,
Sit only watchful with their heavy wings
To cuff down new-fledg'd virtues, that would rise
To nobler heights, and make the grove harmonious.

Jaf. What can I do ?

Pier. Canst thou not kill a senator ?

Jaf. Were there one wise or honest, I could kill
him,

For herding with that nest of fools and knaves.
By all my wrongs, thou talk'st as if revenge
Were to be had ; and the brave story warms me.

Pier. Swear then !

Jaf. I do, by all those glittering stars,
And yon great ruling planet of the night ;
By all good pow'rs above, and ill below ;
By love and friendship, dearer than my life, 200
No pow'r or death shall make me false to thee.

Pier. Here we embrace, and I'll unlock my heart.
A council's held hard by, where the destruction
Of this great empire's hatching: there I'll lead thee.
But be a man! for thou'rt to mix with men
Fit to disturb the peace of all the world,
And rule it when it's wildest——

Jaf. I give thee thanks
For this kind warning. Yes, I'll be a man;
And charge thee, Pierre, whene'er thou see'st my
fears

Betray me less, to rip this heart of mine
Out of my breast, and shew it for a coward's.
Come, let's be gone, for from this hour I chase
All little thoughts, all tender human follies
Out of my bosom: Vengeance shall have room:
Revenge!

Pier. And liberty!

Jaf. Revenge! revenge—— [Exeunt.

SCENE III.

Changes to Aquilina's House, the Greek Courtesan.

Enter RENAULT.

Ren. Why was my choice ambition? the worst
ground
A wretch can build on! It's, indeed at distance, 220
A goodly prospect, tempting to the view;
The height delights us, and the mountain top

Looks beautiful, because it's nigh to Heav'n,
But we ne'er think how sandy's the foundation,
What storm will batter, and what tempest shake us.
Who's there?

Enter SPINOSA.

Spin. Renault, good-morrow, for by this time
I think the scale of night has turn'd the balance,
And weighs up morning? Has the clock struck
twelve?

Ren. Yes; Clocks will go as they are set: but man,
Irregular man's ne'er constant, never certain:
I've spent at least three precious hours of darkness
In waiting dull attendance; 'tis the curse
Of diligent virtue to be mix'd, like mine,
With giddy tempers, souls but half resolv'd.

Spin. Hell seize that soul amongst us it can frighten.

Ren. What's then the cause that I am here alone?
Why are we not together?

Enter ELLOT.

O, Sir, welcome!

You are an Englishman: when treason's hatching,
One might have thought you'd not have been behind-
hand.

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In what whore's lap have you been lolling?
Give but an Englishman his whore and ease,
Beef, and a sea-coal fire, he's yours for ever.

Eliz. Frenchman, you are saucy.

Ren. How!

D ij

Enter BEDAMAR the Ambassador, THEODORE, BRAM-VEIL, DURAND, BRABE, REVILLIDO, MEZZANA, TERNON, RETROSI, Conspirators.

Bed. At difference ; fie !

Is this a time for quarrels ? Thieves and rogues
Fall out and brawl : should men of your high calling,
Men separated by the choice of Providence
From the gross heap of mankind, and set here
In this assembly as in one great jewel,
T'adorn the bravest purpose it e'er smil'd on ;
Should you, like boys, wrangle for trifles ?

Ren. Boys !

Bed. Renault, thy hand.

Ren. I thought I'd given my heart
Long since to every man that mingles here ;
But grieve to find it trusted with such tempers,
That can't forgive my froward age its weakness.

Ben. Eliot, thou once had'st virtue. I have seen
Thy stubborn temper bent with god-like goodness,
Not half thus courted : 'Tis thy nation's glory
To hug the foe that offers brave alliance.
One more embrace, my friends—we'll all embrace.
United thus, we are the mighty engine
Must twist this rooted empire from its basis.
Totters not it already ?

Eli. Would 'twere tumbling.

Bed. Nay, it shall down ; this night we seal its
ruin.

Enter PIERRE.

Oh, Pierre ! thou art welcome.
Come to my breast, for by its hopes thou look'st
Lovelylily dreadful, and the fate of Venice
Seems on thy sword already. Oh, my Mars !
The poets that first feign'd a god of war,
Sure prophesy'd of thee.

Pier. Friend, was not Brutus,
(I mean that Brutus, who in open senate
Stabb'd the first Cæsar that usurp'd the world)
A gallant man ;

280.

Ren. Yes, and Catiline too ;
Tho' story wrong his fame : for he conspir'd
To prop the reeling glory of his country :
His cause was good.

Bed. And our's as much above it,
As, Renault, thou'rt superior to Cethegus,
Or Pierre to Cassius.

Pier. Then to what we aim at.
When do we start ? or must we talk for ever ?

Bed. No, Pierre, the deed's near birth ; fate seems
to have set
The business up, and given it to our care ;
I hope there's not a heart or hand amongst us,
But is firm and ready.

All. All:
We'll die with Bedâmar.

Bed. O men
Matchless ! as will your glory be hereafter :

The game is for a matchless prize, if won ;
If lost, disgraceful ruin.

Ren. What can lose it ?

“ The public stock’s a beggar ; one Venetian
“ Trusts not another. Look into their stores
“ Of general safety ; empty magazines,
“ A tatter’d fleet, a murmuring unpaid army,
“ Bankrupt nobility, a harrass’d commonalty,
“ A factious, giddy, and divided senate,
“ Is all the strength of Venice : let’s destroy it ;
“ Lets fill their magazines with arms to awe them ;
“ Man out their fleet, and make their trade maintain-
it ;
“ Let loose the murmuring army on their masters,
“ To pay themselves with plunder ; lop their nobles
“ To the base roots whence most of ’em first sprung ;
“ Enslave the rout, whom smarting will make humble
“ Turn out their droning senate and possess
“ That seat of empire which our souls were fram’d
for.”

Pier. Ten thousand men are armed at your nod,
Commanded all by leaders fit to guide
A battle for the freedom of the world :
This wretched state has starv’d them in its service ;
And, by your bounty quicken’d, they’re resolved
To serve your glory, and revenge their own :
They’ve all their different quarters in this city,
Watch for th’ alarm, and grumble ’tis so tardy.

Bed. I doubt not, friend, but thy unwearied dili-
gence

Has still kept waking, and it shall have ease ;
After this night it is resolv'd we meet
No more, till Venice owns us for her lords.

Pier. How lovelily the Adriatic whore,
Dress'd in her flames, will shine ? Devouring flames !
Such as shall burn her to the watery bottom,
And hiss in her foundation.

Bed. Now if any
Amongst us, that owns this glorious cause,
Have friends or interest he'd wish to save,
Let it be told : the general doom is seal'd ;
But I'd forego the hopes of a world's empire,
Rather than wound the bowels of my friend.

Pier. I must confess, you there have touch'd my
weakness,
I have a friend ; hear it ! such a friend,
My heart was ne'er shut to him. Nay, I'll tell you :
He knows the very business of this hour ;
But he rejoices in the cause, and loves it :
We've chang'd a vow to live and die together,
And he's at hand to ratify it here.

Ren. How ! all betray'd !

Pier. No—I've nobly dealt with you ;
I've brought my all into the public stock :
I've but one friend, and him I'll share amongst you :
Receive and cherish him ; or if, when seen
And search'd, you find him worthless ; as my tongue
Has lodg'd this secret in his faithful breast,
To ease your fears, I wear a dagger here

Shall rip it out again, and give you rest.
Come forth, thou only good I e'er could boast of.

Enter JAFFIER, with a Dagger.

Bed. His presence bears the shew of manly virtue.

Jaf. I know you'll wonder all, that thus uncall'd,
I dare approach this place of fatal councils;
But I'm amongst you, and by heav'n it glads me
To see so many virtues thus united
To restore justice, and dethrone oppression.
Command this sword, if you would have it quiet,
Into this breast; but, if you think it worthy
To cut the throats of reverend rogues in robes,
Send me into the curs'd assembled senate:
It shrinks not, tho' I meet a father there.
Would you behold this city flaming? here's
A hand shall bear a lighted torch at noon
To th' arsenal, and set its gates on fire.

Ren. You talk this well, Sir.

Jaf. Nay—by Heaven I'll do this.
Come, come, I read distrust in all your faces:
You fear me a villain, and, indeed, it's odd
To hear a stranger talk thus, at first meeting,
Of matters that have been so well debated;
But I come ripe with wrongs, as you with councils.
I hate this senate, am a foe to Venice;
A friend to none, but men resolv'd like me
To push on mischief. Oh! did you but know me,
I need not talk thus!

Bed. Pierre, I must embrace him.

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My heart beats to this man, as if it knew him.

Ren. I never lov'd these huggers.

Jaf. Still I see

The cause delights ye not. Your friends survey me

As I were dangerous——But I come arm'd

Against all doubts, and to your trust will give

A pledge, worth more than all the world can pay for.

My Belvidera. Hoa; my Belvidera!

Bed. What wonder 's next?

Jaf. Let me entreat you,

As I have henceforth hopes to call you friends,

That all but the ambassador, and this

Grave guide of councils, with my friend that owns me,

Withdraw a while, to spare a woman's blushes.

[*Exeunt all but BED. REN. JAF. PIER.*]

Enter BELVIDERA.

Bed. Pierre, whither will this ceremony lead us?

Jaf. My Belvidera! Belvidera!

Bel. Who,

Who calls so loud at this late peaceful hour?

That voice was wont to come in gentle whispers,

And fill my ears with the soft breath of love. 400

Thou hourly image of my thoughts, where art thou?

Jaf. Indeed 'tis late.

Bel. Oh! I have slept and dreamt,

“ And dreamt again. Where hast thou been, thou
loiterer?

“ Tho' my eyes clos'd, my arms have still been open'd:

“ Stretch'd every way betwixt my broken slumbers,

" To search if thou wert come to crown my rest :

" There's no repose without thee : Oh ! the day

" Too soon will break, and wake us to our sorrow.

" Come, come to bed, and bid thy cares good night.

Jaf. " Oh Belvidera ! we must change the scene,

" In which the past delights of life were tasted :

" The poor sleep little ; we must learn to watch

" Our labours late, and early every morning ;

" 'Midst winter frosts, thin clad, and fed with sparing,

" Rise to our toils, and drudge away the day."

Bel. Alas ! where am I ! whither is't you lead me ?

Methinks I read distraction in your face,

Something less gentle than the fate you tell me.

You shake and tremble too ! your blood runs cold !

Heav'n's guard my love, and bless his heart with pa-
tience.

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Jaf. That I have patience, let our fate bear witness,

Who has ordain'd it so, that thou and I,

(Thou, the divinest good man e'er possess'd,

And I, the wretched'st of the race of man)

This very hour, without one tear, must part.

Bel. Part ! must we part ? Oh, am I then forsaken ?

" Will my love cast me off ? Have my misfortunes

" Offended him so highly, that he'll leave me ?"

Why drag you from me ; Whither are you going

My dear ! my life ! my love !

Jaf. Oh, friends !

Bel. Speak to me.

Jaf. Take her from my heart,

She'll gain such hold else, I shall ne'er get loose.

I charge thee take her, but with tender'st care

Relieve her troubles, and assuage her sorrows,

Ren. Rise, Madam, and command amongst your
servants.

Jaf. To you, Sirs, and your honours I bequeath her,
And with her this; when I prove unworthy——

[*Gives a Dagger.*]

You know the rest——Then strike it to her heart;
And tell her, he who three whole happy years
Lay in her arms, and each kind night repeated
The passionate vows of still increasing love,
Sent that reward for all her truth and sufferings.

Bel. Nay, take my life, since he has sold it cheaply;
“Or send me to some distant clime your slave;
“But let it be far off, lest my complainings
“Should reach his guilty ears, and shake his peace.

Jaf. “No, Belvidera, I’ve contriv’d thy honour.
“Trust to my faith, and be but fortune kind
“To me, as I’ll preserve that faith unbroken;
“When next we meet, I’ll lift thee to a height
“Shall gather all the gazing world about thee,
“To wonder what strange virtue plac’d thee there.
“But if we ne’er meet more.”

Bel. O! thou unkind one;
Ne’er meet more! have I deserv’d this from you;
Look on me, tell me, speak, thou fair deceiver.
Why am I separated from thy love?

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If I am false, accuse me, but if true,
Don’t, prythee don’t, in poverty forsake me,
But pity the sad heart that’s torn with parting.

Yet hear me, yet recall me—

[*Exeunt* REN. BED. and BEL.

Jaf. Oh ! “ my eyes,

“ Look not that way, but turn yourselves a while

“ Into my heart, and be wean'd altogether.”

My friend, where art thou ?

Pier. Here, my honour's brother.

Jaf. Is Belvidera gone ?

Pier. Renault has led her

Back to her own apartment ; but by Heav'n,

Thou must not see her more, till our work's over.

Jaf. No !

Pier. Not for your life.

Jaf. Oh, Pierre, wert thou but she,

How I would pull thee down into my heart,

Gaze on thee, till my eye-strings crack'd with love ;

“ Till all my sinews, with its fire extended,

“ Fix'd me upon the rack of ardent longing” : 480

Then, swelling, sighing, raging to be blest,

Come, like a panting turtle to thy breast ;

On thy soft bosom hovering, bill and play,

Confess the cause why last I fled away ;

Own 'twas a fault, but swear to give it o'er,

And never follow false ambition more. [*Exeunt.*

ACT III. SCENE I.

“ Enter AQUILINA and her Maid.

“ *Aquilina.*

“ TELL him I am gone to bed ; tell him I am not at
“ home ; tell him I’ve better company with me, or
“ any thing ; tell him, in short, I will not see him,
“ the eternal troublesome vexatious fool : He’s worse
“ company than an ignorant physician—I’ll not be
“ disturb’d at these unseasonable hours.

“ *Maid.* But, madam ! He’s here already, just en-
“ ter’d the doors.

“ *Aqui.* Turn him out again, you unnecessary,
“ useless, giddy-brain’d ass : If he will not be gone,
“ set the house a fire, and burn us both : I’d rather
“ meet a toad in my dish, than that old hideous ani-
“ mal in my chamber to-night. 13

Enter ANTONIO.

“ *Ant.* Nacky, Nacky, Nacky——How dost do,
“ Nacky ? Hurry, durry. I am come, little Nacky ;
“ past eleven o’clock, a late hour ; time in all con-
“ science to go to bed, Nacky——Nacky, did I say ?
“ Ay, Nacky, Aquilina, lina, lina, quilina, quilina,
“ quilina, Aquilina, Naquilina, Naquilina, Acky,
“ Acky, Acky, Nacky, Nacky, queen Nacky——
“ Come, let’s to bed——you Fubbs, you Pug you

“——you little puss——Purre, Tuzzy——I am a senator.

“ *Aqui.* You are are a fool, I am sure.

“ *Ant.* May be so too, sweet-heart: never the worse senator for all that. Come, Nacky, Nacky, let’s have a game at romps, Nacky.

“ *Aqui.* You would do well, Signor, to be troublesome here no longer, but leave me to myself; be sober, and go home, Sir.

“ *Ant.* Home, Madona!

“ *Aqui.* Ay, home, Sir. Who am I? 32

“ *Ant.* Madona, as I take it, you are my—you are——thou art my little, Nacky, Nacky——that’s all.

“ *Aqui.* I find, you are resolv’d to be troublesome; and so, to make short of the matter in few words, I hate you, detest you, loath you, I am weary of you, sick of you—hang you, you are an old, silly, impertinent, impotent, solicitous coxcomb; crazy in your head, and lazy in your body; love to be meddling with every thing, and, if you had not money, you are good for nothing.

“ *Ant.* Good for nothing! Hurry, durry, I’ll try that presently. Sixty-one years old, and good for nothing: that’s brave: [*To the Maid*] Come, come, come Mrs. Fiddle-faddle, turn you out for a season: Go, turn out, I say, it is our will and pleasure to be private some moments——out, out, when you are bid to——[*Puts her out and locks the door*] Good for nothing, you say?

“ *Aqui.* Why, what are you good for?

“ *Ant.* In the first place, Madam, I am old, and
 “ consequently very wise, very wise, Madona, d’ye
 “ mark that? In the second place, take notice, if you
 “ please, that I am a senator; and, when I think fit,
 “ can make speeches, Madona. Hurry durry, I can
 “ make a speech in the senate-house, now and then—
 “ would make your hair stand an end, Madona.

“ *Aqui.* What care I for your speeches in the se-
 “ nate-house? if you would be silent here, I should
 “ thank you.

“ *Ant.* Why I can make speeches to thee too, my
 “ lovely Madona; for example:—

“ My cruel Fair one, since it is my fate,
 “ That you should with your servant angry
 “ prove,
 “ Though late at night, I hope ’tis not too late
 “ With this to gain reception for my Love.

[*Takes out a purse of Gold, and at every pause shakes it*]

“ —There’s for thee, my little Nicky Nacky—take it,
 “ here take it—I say take it, or I’ll throw it at your
 “ head—how now rebel? 70

“ *Aqui.* Truly, my illustrious senator, I must con-
 “ fess, your honour is at present, most profoundly
 “ eloquent indeed.

“ *Ant.* Very well: Come, now let’s sit down, and
 “ think upon’t a little—come, sit, I say—sit down
 “ by me a little, my Nicky Nacky. A—[*sits down.*]
 “ Hurry durry—good for nothing—

" *Aqui*. No, Sir, if you please, I can know my dis-
tance, and stand.

" *Ant*. Stand! How, Nacky up, and I down?

" Nay, then, let me exclaim with the poet,

" Shew me a case more pitiful who can,

" A standing woman and a falling man. 83

" Hurry, durry—not sit down—see this, ye gods!

" You won't sit down?

" *Aqui*. No, sir.

" *Ant*. Then look you now; suppose me a bull, a
" Basan-bull, the bull of bulls, or any bull. Thus
" up I get, and with my brows, thus bent—I broo,
" I say, I broo, I broo, I broo. You won't sit down,
" will you—I broo——

" [*Bellows like a bull, and drives her about.*

" *Aqui*. Well, Sir, I must endure this. [*She sits
down.*] Now your honour has been a bull, pray
" what beast will your worship please to be next?

" *Ant*. Now, I'll be a senator again, and thy lover,
" little Nicky Nacky. [*He sits by her.*] Ah! toad,
" toad, toad, toad! Spit in my face a little, Nacky, spit
" in my face, pr'ythee, spit in my face never so little:
" Spit but a little bit—spit, spit, spit—spit—when you
" are bid, I say—do, pr'ythee spit,—now, now,
" now, spit; what you won't spit, will you? then I'll
" be a dog. 108

" *Aqui*. A dog, my Lord!

" *Ant*. Ay a dog—and I'll give thee, this t'other
" purse, to let me be a dog—and use me like a dog a

"little. Hurry durry—I will—here 'tis—

[*Gives the purse.*]

"*Aqui.* Well, with all my heart. But let me beseech your dogship to play your tricks over as fast as you can, that you may come to stinking the sooner, and be turn'd out of doors, as you deserve.

"*Ant.* Ay, ay—no matter for that—that shan't move me—[*He gets under the table.*] Now, bough, waugh, waugh, waugh, bough, waugh.—[*Barks like a dog.*]

"*Aqui.* Hold, hold, hold, Sir, I beseech you : What is't you do ? If curs bite, they must be kick'd, Sir : Do you see, kick'd thus.

"*Ant.* Ay, with all my heart : Do, kick, kick on ; now I am under the table, kick again—kick harder—harder yet, bough, waugh, waugh, waugh, bough—odd, I'll have a snap at thy shins —bough, waugh, waugh, waugh, bough—odd; she kicks bravely—— 122

"*Aqui.* Nay, then I'll go another way to work with you : And I think here's an instrument fit for the purpose ? [*Fetches a whip and a bell.*] What, bite your mistress, sirrah ? out of door, you dog, to kennel, and be hang'd—bite your mistress by the legs, you rogue—— [*She whips him.*]

"*Ant.* Nay, pr'ythee Nacky, now thou art too loving : Hurry durry, odd, I'll be a dog no longer.

"*Aqui.* Nay none of your fawning and grinning : But be gone, or here's the discipline. What, bite

“ your mistress by the leg, you mungrel ? Out of
“ door’s——hout, hout, to kennel, sirrah, go.

“ *Ant.* This is very barbarous usage, Nacky, very
“ barbarous : look you, I will not go——I will
“ not stir from the door, that I resolve——hurry
“ durry, what, shut me out? [*She whips him out.*

“ *Aqui.* Ay, and if you come here any more to-
“ night, I’ll have my footmen lug you, you cur ?
What bite your poor mistress, Nacky, sirrah ? 141

Enter Maid.

“ Heav’ns ! Madam, what’s the matter ?

[*He howls at the door like a dog.*

“ *Aqui.* Call my footmen hither presently.

Enter two Footmen.

“ *Maid.* They’re here already, Madam ; the house
“ is all alarm’d with a strange noise, that no body
“ knows what to make of.

“ *Aqui.* Go, all of you, and turn that troublesome
“ beast in the next room out of my house——If I
“ ever see him within these walls again, without my
“ leave for his admittance, you sneaking rogues——
“ I’ll have you poison’d, all poison’d like rats ; every
“ corner of the house shall stink of one of you ; go,
“ and learn hereafter to know my pleasure. So ; now
“ for my Pierre.

“ Thus, when the god-like lover is displeas’d,

“ We sacrifice our fool, and he’s appeas’d.

[*Exeunt.*

SCENE IV.

A Chamber. Enter BELVIDERA.

Bel. I'm sacrific'd ! I'm sold ! betray'd to shame !
Inevitable ruin has enclos'd me !

" No sooner was I to my bed repair'd

" To welgh and (weeping) ponder my condition ;

" But the old hoary wretch, to whose false care 161

" My peace and honour was entrusted, came,

" (Like Tarquin) ghastly, with infernal lust.

" Oh, thou Roman Lucrece, !

" Thou could'st find friends, to vindicate thy wrong !

" I never had but one, and he's prov'd false :

He that should guard my virtue, has betray'd it ;

Left me ! Undone me ! Oh, that I could hate him !

Where shall I go ? Oh, whither, whither, wander ?

Enter JAFFIER.

Jaf. Can Belvidera want a resting-place,
When these poor arms are ready to receive her ?

" Oh ! 'tis in vain to struggle with desires,

" Strong is my love to thee ; for, every moment

" I'm from thy sight, the heart within my bosom,

" Mourns like a tender infant in its cradle,

" Whose nurse had left it. Come, and with the songs

" Of gentle love, persuade it to its peace. \

" *Bel.* I fear the stubborn wanderer will not own
me ;

" 'Tis grown a rebel, to be rul'd no longer ;

“ Scorns the indulgent bosom that first lull’d it, 180

“ And, like a disobedient child, disdains

“ The soft authority of Belvidera.

Jaf. There was a time——

Bel. Yes, yes, there was a time,
When Belvidera’s tears, her cries, and sorrows,
Were not despis’d; when, if she chanc’d to sigh,
Or look’d but sad——there was indeed a time,
When Jaffier wou’d have ta’en her in his arms,
Eas’d her declining head upon his breast,
And never left her, till he found the cause.

But let her now weep seas;
Cry, till she rend the earth; sigh, till she burst
Her heart asunder; still he hears it all
Deaf as the winds, and as the rocks unshaken.

“ *Jaf.* Have I been deaf? Am I that rock unmov’d?
“ Against whose root, tears beat, and sighs are sent
“ In vain? have I beheld thy sorrows calmly?
“ Witness against me, Heavens, have I done this?
“ Then bear me in a whirlwind back again,
“ And let that angry dear one ne’er forgive me. 200
“ Oh! thou too rashly censurest of my love;
“ Could’st thou but think, how I have spent this night,
“ Dark, and alone, no pillow to my head,
“ Rest in my eyes, nor quiet in my heart,
“ Thou would’st not, Belvidera, sure thou would’st,
not

“ Talk to me thus; but like a pitying angel,
“ Spreading thy wings, come settle on my breast

“ And hatch warm comforts there, e’re sorrows freeze it.

“ *Bel.* Why then, poor mourner, in what baleful corner

“ Hast thou been talking, with that witch, the night ?

“ On what cold stone hast thou been stretch’d along,

“ Gathering the grumbling winds about thy head,

“ To mix with theirs, the accents of thy woes ?

“ Oh ! now I find the cause my love forsakes me ;

“ I am no longer fit to bear a share

“ In his concernments—My weak female virtue

“ Must not be trusted : ’tis too frail and tender.”

Jaf. Oh, Portia, Portia ! What a soul was thine ?

Bel. That Portia was a woman ; and when Brutus, Big with the fate of Rome, (Heav’n guard thy safety !) Conceal’d from her the labours of his mind ;

She let him see her blood was great as his,

Flow’d from a spring as noble, and a heart

Fit to partake his troubles as his love.

Fetch, fetch that dagger back, the dreadful dower,

Thou gav’st last night in parting with me ; strike it

Here to my heart ; and as the blood flows from it,

Judge if it run not pure, as Cato’s daughter’s.

“ *Jaf.* Thou art too good, and I indeed unworthy,

“ Unworthy so much virtue. Teach me how 230

“ I may deserve such matchless love as thine,

“ And see with what attention I’ll obey thee.

“ *Bel.* Do not despise me : that’s the all I ask.

“ *Jaf.* Despise thee ! Hear me——

“ *Bel.* Oh ! Thy charming tongue,

" Is but too well acquainted with my weakness ;

" Knows, let it name but love, my melting heart

" Dissolves within my breast ; till with clos'd eyes

" I reel into thy arms, and all's forgotten.

Jaf. What shall I do ?

Bel. Tell me ; be just, and tell me,

" Why dwells that busy cloud upon thy face ?

" Why am I made a stranger ? Why that sigh,

" And I not know the cause ? Why, when the world

" Is wrapp'd in rest, why chuses then my love

" To wander up and down in horrid darkness,

" Loathing his bed, and these desiring arms ?

" Why are these eyes blood-shot with tedious watch-
ing ?

" Why starts he now, and looks as if he wish'd

" His fate were finish'd ? Tell me, ease my fear ; 250

" Lest, when we next time meet, I want the power

" To search into the sickness of thy mind,

" But talk as wildly then as thou look'st now.

Jaf. Oh, Belvidera !

Bel. Why was I last night deliver'd to a villain ?

Jaf. Ha ! a villain ?

Bel. Yes, to a villain ! Why at such an hour
Meets that assembly, all made up of wretches,

" That looks as hell had drawn them into league ? "

Why, I in this hand, and in that a dagger,

Was I deliver'd with such dreadful ceremonies ?

To you, Sirs, and to your honours I bequeath her,

And with her this : Whene'er I prove unworthy—

You know the rest—then strike it to her heart.

Oh! why's that rest conceal'd from me? Must I
Be made the hostage of a hellish trust?
For such I know I am; that's all my value.
But, by the love and loyalty I owe thee,
I'll free thee from the bondage of these slaves;
Straight to the senate, tell 'em all I know,
All that I think, all that my fears inform me.

270

Jaf. Is this the Roman virtue; this the blood
That boasts its purity with Cato's daughter?
Would she have e'er betray'd her Brutus?

Bel. No:

For Brutus trusted her. Wert thou so kind,
What would not Belvidera suffer for thee?

Jaf. I shall undo myself, and tell thee all.

"*Bel.* Look not upon me as I am, a woman:

" But as a bone, thy wife, thy friend; who long

" Has had admission to thy heart, and there

" Study'd the virtues of thy gallant nature.

" Thy constancy, thy courage, and thy truth,

" Have been my daily lesson: I have learn'd 'em

" And, bold as thou, can suffer or despise

" The worst of fates for thee, and with thee share
'em."

Jaf. Oh, you divinest Powers look down and hear
" My prayers! instruct me to reward this virtue!"
Yet think a little, ere thou tempt me further;
Think I've a tale to tell will shake thy nature, 296
Melt all this boasted constancy thou talk'st of,
Into vile tears and despicable sorrows:

Then if thou should'st betray me !——

Bel. Shall I swear ?

Jaf. No, do not swear : I would not violate
Thy tender nature, with so rude a bond :
But as thou hop'st to see me live my days,
And love thee long, lock this within thy breast :
I've bound myself, by all the strictest sacraments,
Divine and human—— 300

Bel. Speak !

Jaf. To kill thy father——

Bel. My father !

Jaf. Nay, the throats of the whole senate
Shall bleed, my Belvidera. He, amongst us,
That spares his father, brother, or his friend,
Is damn'd. “ How rich and beauteous will the face
“ Of ruin look, when these wide streets run blood !
“ I, and the glorious partners of my fortune,
“ Shouting, and striding o'er the prostrate dead,
“ Still to new waste ; whilst thou, far off in safety,
“ Smiling, shalt see the wonders of our daring ;
“ And when night comes, with praise and love receive
me.

Bel. Oh !

Jaf. Have a care, and shrink not even in thought :
For if thou dost——

Bel. I know it ; thou wilt kill me.

Do, strike thy sword into this bosom : lay me
Dead on the earth, and then thou wilt be safe.
Murder my father ! tho' his cruel nature 320

Has persecuted me to my undoing ;
 Driven me to basest wants ; can I behold him,
 With smiles of vengeance, butcher'd in his age ?
 The sacred fountain of my life destroy'd ?
 And can'st thou shed the blood, that gave me being ?
 Nay, be a traitor too, and sell thy country ?
 Can thy great heart descend so vilely low,
 Mix with hir'd slaves, bravoës, and common stabbers,
 " Nose-slitters, alley-lurking villains ! " join
 With such a crew, and take a ruffian's wages,
 To cut the throats of wretches as they sleep ?

Jaf. Thou wrong'st me, Belvidera ! I've engag'd
 With men of souls ; fit to reform the ills
 Of all mankind : there's not a heart amongst them
 But's stout as death, yet honest as the nature
 Of man first made, e'er fraud and vice were fashion.

Bel. What's he, to whose curst hands last night
 thou gav'st me ?

Was that well done ? Oh ! I could tell a story,
 Would rouse thy lion heart out of its den,
 And make it rage with terrifying fury.

840

Jaf. Speak on, I charge thee.

Bel. O my love ! If e'er
 Thy Belvidera's peace deserv'd thy care,
 Remove me from this place. Last night, last night !

Jaf. Distract me not, but give me all the truth.

Bel. No sooner wert thou gone, and I alone,
 Left in the pow'r of that old son of mischief ;
 No sooner was I lain on my sad bed,

But that vile wretch approach'd me, "loose, unbutton'd,

"Ready for violation:" Then my heart
Throbb'd with its fears: Oh, how I wept and sigh'd,
And shrunk and trembled! wish'd in vain for him
That should protect me! Thou, alas! wert gone.

Jaf. Patience, sweet Heav'n, 'till I make vengeance
sure.

Bel. He drew the hideous dagger forth, thou gav'st
him,

And with upbraiding smiles, he said, *Behold it:*

This is the pledge of a false husband's love:

And in my arms, then press'd, and would have clasp'd
me;

But with my cries, I scar'd his coward heart,
Till he withdrew, and mutter'd vows to hell. 360
These are thy friends! with these thy life, thy honour,
Thy love, all stak'd, and all will go to ruin.

Jaf. No more: I charge thee keep this secret close.
Clear up thy sorrows; look as if thy wrongs
Were all forgot, and treat him like a friend,
As no complaint were made. No more; retire,
Retire, my life, and doubt not of my honour;
I'll heal its failings, and deserve thy love

Bel. Oh! Should I part with thee, I fear thou wilt
In anger leave me, and return no more.

Jaf. Return no more! I would not live without
thee

Another night, to purchase the creation.

Bel. When shall we meet again?

Jaf. Anon, at twelve
I'll steal myself to thy expecting arms:
Come like a travell'd dove, and bring thee peace.

Bel. Indeed !

Jaf. By all our loves.

Bel. 'Tis hard to part :

But sure no falshood ever look'd so fairly. 380

Farewel; remember twelve. [Exit.

Jaf. Let Heav'n forget me,
When I remember not thy truth, thy love.
" How curs'd is my condition, toss'd and jostled
" From every corner ; fortune's common fool,
" The jest of rogues, an instrumental ass,
" For villains to lay loads of shame upon,
" And drive about just for their ease and scorn."

Enter PIERRE.

Pier. Jaffier.

Jaf. Who calls ?

Pier. A friend, that could have wish'd
T' have found thee otherwise employed. What, hunt
A wife, on the dull soil ! Sure a staunch husband
Of all hounds is the dullest. Wilt thou never,
Never be wean'd from caudles and confections ?
What feminine tales hast thou been list'ning to,
Of unair'd shirts, catarrhs and tooth ach, got
By thin-sol'd shoes ? Damnation ! that a fellow,
Chosen to be a sharer in the destruction
Of a whole people, should sneak thus into corners
To ease his fulsome lusts, and fool his mind. 421

Jaf. May not a man then trifle out an hour
With a kind woman, and not wrong his calling?

Pier. Not in a cause like ours.

Jaf. Then, friend, our cause
Is in a damn'd condition : for I'll tell thee,
That canker-worm, call'd Lechery, has touch'd it ;
'Tis tainted vilely. Would'st thou think it? Renault
(That mortify'd old wither'd winter rogue)
Loves simple fornication like a priest ;
I found him out for watering at my wife ;
He visited her last night, like a kind guardian :
Faith ! she has some temptation, that's the truth
on't.

Pier. He durst not wrong his trust.

Jaf. 'Twas something late, though,
To take the freedom of a lady's chamber.

Pier. Was she in bed ?

Jaf. Yes, faith, in virgin sheets,
White as her bosom, Pierre, dish'd neatly up,
Might tempt a weaker appetite to taste. 420
Oh ! how the old fox stunk, I warrant thee,
When the rank fit was on him !

Pier. Patience guide me !
He's us'd no violence ?

Jaf. No, no ; out on't, violence !
Play'd with her neck ; brush'd her with his grey beard ;
Struggl'd and touz'd ; tickl'd her till she squeak'd a
little,
May be, or so—but not a jot of violence—

Pier. Damn him.

Jaf. Ay, so say I: but hush, no more on't.
 All hitherto is well, and I believe
 Myself no monster yet: "tho' no man knows
 "What fate he's born to." Sure it is near the hour
 We all should meet for our concluding orders:
 Will the ambassador be here in person?

Pier. No, he has sent commission to that villain
 Renault,

To give the executing charge:
 I'd have thee be a man, if possible,
 And keep thy temper; for a brave revenge
 Ne'er comes too late.

440

Jaf. Fear not, I am cool as patience.
 "Had he completed my dishonour, rather
 "Than hazard the success our hopes are ripe for,
 "I'd bear it all with mortifying virtue."

Pier. He's yonder, coming this way thro' the hall;
 His thoughts seem full.

Jaf. Pr'ythee retire, and leave me
 With him alone: I'll put him to some trial;
 See how his rotten part will bear the touching.

Pier. Be careful, then.

[Exit.

Jaf. Nay, never doubt, but trust me.
 What I be a devil, take a damning oath
 For shedding native blood! Can there be a sin
 In merciful repentance? Oh, this villain!

Enter RENAULT.

Ren. Perverse and peevish: What a slave is man
 To let his itching flesh thus get the better of him!

Dispatch the tool her husband—that were well.

Who's there?

Jaf. A man.

Ren. My friend, my near ally, 460
The hostage of your faith, my beauteous charge, is
very well.

Jaf. Sir, are you sure of that?
Stands she in perfect health? Beats her pulse even;
Neither too hot nor cold?

Ren. What means that question?

Jaf. Oh! women have fantastic constitutions,
Inconstant in their wishes, always wavering,
And never fix'd. Was it not boldly done,
Even at first sight, to trust the thing I lov'd
(A tempting treasure too) with youth so fierce
And vigorous as thine? but thou art honest.

Ren. Who dares accuse me?

Jaf. Curs'd be he that doubts
Thy virtue! I have try'd it, and declare,
Were I to choose a guardian of my honour,
I'd put it in thy keeping: for I know thee.

Ren. Know me!

Jaf. Ay, know thee. There's no falshood in thee;
Thou look'st just as thou art. Let us embrace.
Now would'st thou cut my throat, or I cut thine. 480

Ren. You dare not do't.

Jaf. You lie, Sir.

Ren. How!

Jaf. No more,
'Tis a base world, and must reform, that's all.

Enter SPINOSA, THEODORE, ELIOT, REVILLIDO.
DURAND, BROMVEIL, and the rest of the Conspirators.

Ren. Spinosa, Theodore!

Spin. The same.

Ren. You are welcome.

Spin. You are trembling, Sir.

Ren. 'Tis a cold night, indeed, and I am aged ;
Full of decay and natural infirmities : [*Pier. re-enters.*
We shall be warm, my friends, I hope to-morrow.

Pier. 'Twas not well done ; thou should'st have
stroak'd him,

And not have gall'd him.

Jaf. Damn him, let him chew on't.

Heav'n ! Where am I ? beset with cursed fiends,
That wait to damn me ! What a devil's man,
When he forgets his nature——hush, my heart.

Ren. My friends, 'tis late ; are we assembled all ?

“ Where's Theodore ?

500

Theod. “ At hand.

Ren. “ Spinosa.

Spin. “ Here.

Ren. “ Bromveil.

Brom. “ I'm ready.

Ken. “ Durand and Brabe.

Dur. “ Command us.

We are both prepar'd”

Omnes. All ; all.

Ren. “ Mezzano, Revillido,

“ Ternon, Retrosi ! Oh ! you're men, I find,

Fit to behold your fate, and meet her summons.
To-morrow's rising sun must see you all
Deck'd in your honours. Are the soldiers ready?

Pier. All, all.

Ren. You, Durand, with your thousand must possess
St. Mark's; you, Captain, know your charge already
'Tis to secure the ducal palace: "You,
" Brabe, with an hundred more, must gain the Secque:
" With the like number, Bromveil, to the Procurale;"
Be all this done with the least tumult possible, 521
'Till in each place you post sufficient guards:
Then sheathe your swords in every breast you meet.

Jaf. Oh! reverend cruelty! damn'd bloody villain!

Ren. During this execution, Durand, you
Must in the midst keep your battalia fast;
And, Theodore, be sure to plant the cannon
That may command the streets; "whilst Revillido,
" Messano, Ternon, and Retrosi guard you."
This done, we'll give the general alarm,
Apply petards, and force the ars'nal gates;
Then fire the city round in several places,
Or with our cannon (if it dare resist)
Batter to ruin. But above all I charge you,
Shed blood enough; spare neither sex nor age,
Name nor condition; if there live a senator
After to-morrow, though the dullest rogue
That e'er said nothing, we have lost our ends.
If possible, let's kill the very name
Of senator, and bury it in blood. 540

Jaf. Merciless, horrid slave—Ay, blood enough!

Shed blood enough, old Renault ! how thou charm'st
me !

Ren. But one thing more, and then farewell, till
fate

Join us again, or sep'rate us for ever :

First let's embrace. Heav'n knows who next shall thus

Wing ye together ; but let's all remember,

We wear no common cause upon our swords :

Let each man think that on his single virtue

Depends the good and fame of all the rest ;

Eternal honour, or perpetual infamy.

“ Let us remember through what dreadful hazards

“ Propitious fortune hitherto has led us :

“ How often on the brink of some discovery

“ Have we stood tottering, yet still kept our ground .

“ So well, that the busiest searchers ne'er could fol-
low

“ Those subtle tracks, which puzzled all suspicion ?”

You droop, Sir.

Jaf. No ; With most profound attention
I've heard it all, and wonder at thy virtue.

Ren. “ Tho' there be yet few hours 'twixt them
and ruin,

“ Are not the senate lull'd in full security, 561

“ Quiet and satisfy'd, as fools are always ?

“ Never did so profound repose fore-run

“ Calamity so great. Nay, our good fortune

“ Has blinded the most piercing of mankind,

“ Strengthen'd the fearfullest, charm'd the most sus-
pectful,

“ Confounded the most subtle : for we live,
“ We live, my friends, and quickly shall our life
“ Prove fatal to these tyrants.” Let’s consider,
That we destroy oppression, avarice,
A people nurs’d up equally with vices
And loathsome lusts, which nature most abhors,
And such as without shame she cannot suffer.

Jaf. Oh, Belvidera ! take me to thy arms,
And shew me where’s my peace, for I have lost it.

[*Exit.*

Ren. Without the least remorse then, let’s resolve
With fire and sword t’exterminate these tyrants ;
“ And when we shall behold those curs’d tribunals
“ Stain’d by the tears and sufferings of the innocent,
“ Burning with flames rather from Heav’n than ours,
“ The raging, furious, and unpitying soldier 581
“ Pulling his reeking dagger from the bosoms
“ Of gasping wretches ; death in every quarter ;
“ With all that sad disorder can produce
“ To make a spectacle of horror ; then,
“ Then let us call to mind, my dearest friends,
“ That there is nothing pure upon the earth ;
“ That the most valu’d things have most allays,
“ And that in change of all these vile enormities,”
Under whose weight this wretched country labours,
The means are only in our hands to crown them.

Pier. And may those pow’rs above, that are pro-
pitious
To gallant minds, record this cause and bless it.

Ren. Thus happy, thus secure of all we wish for,

Should there, my friends, be found among us one
False to this glorious enterprise, what fate,
What vengeance were enough for such a villain ?

Eli. Death here without repentance, Hell hereafter.

Ren. Let that be my lot, if as here I stand,
Listed by fate among her darling sons, 600
Tho' I had one only brother, dear by all
The strictest ties of nature ; " tho' one hour
" Had given us birth, one fortune fed our wants,
" One only love, and that but of each other,
" Still fill'd our minds ;" could I have such a friend
Join'd in this cause, and had but ground to fear
He mean't foul play ; may this right hand drop from
me,

If I'd not hazard all my future peace,
And stab him to the heart before you. Who,
Who would do less ? Would'st thou not, Pierre, the
same ?

Pier. You've singled me, Sir, out for this hard
question.

As if 'twere started only for my sake ?
Am I the thing you fear ! Here, here's my bosom,
Search it with all your swords. Am I a traitor ?

Ren. No : but I fear your late commended friend
Is little less. Come, Sirs, 'tis now no time
To trifle with our safety. Where's this Jaffier ?

Spin. He left the room just now, in strange disorder.

Ren. Nay, there is danger in him : I observ'd him ;
During the time I took for explanation, 620
He was transported from most deep attention

To a confusion which he could not smother,
“ His looks grew full of sadness and surprise,
“ All which betray’d a wavering spirit in him,
“ That labour’d with reluctancy and sorrow.”

What’s requisite for safety, must be done
With speedy execution ; he remains
Yet in our power : I, for my own part, wear
A dagger——

Pier. Well.

Ren. And I could wish it——

Pier. Where ?

Ren. Buried in his heart.

Pier. Away ; we’re yet all friends,
No more of this, ’twill breed ill blood among us.

Spin. Let us all draw our swords, and search the
house,

Pull him from the dark hole where he sits brooding
O’er his cold fears, and each man kill his share of him.

Pier. Who talks of killing ? Who’s he’ll shed the
blood

That’s dear to me ? is’t you, or you, or you, Sir ! 640
What, not one speak ! how you stand gaping all
On your grave oracle, your wooden god there !
Yet not a word ! Then, Sir, I’ll tell you a secret ;
Suspicion’s but at best a coward’s virtue. [To Ren.

Ren. A coward !—— [Handles his sword

Pier. Put up thy sword, old man ;
Thy hand shakes at it. Come let’s heal this breach ;
I am too hot, we yet may all live friends.

Spin. Till we are safe, our friendship cannot be so.

Pier. Again! Who's that?

650

Spi. 'Twas I.

The. And I.

Ren. And I.

Om. And all.

Ren. "Who are on my side?"

Spi. "Every honest sword.

Let's die like men, and not be sold like slaves.

Pier. One such word more, by Heav'n I'll to the senate,

And hang ye all, like dogs, in clusters.

Why weep your coward swords half out their shells?

Why do you not all brandish them like mine?

You fear to die, and yet dare talk of killing.

Ren. Go to the senate, and betray us! haste!

Secure thy wretched life; we fear to die

Less than thou dar'st be honest.

Pier. That's rank falshood.

Fear'st not thou death! Fie, there's a knavish itch

In that salt blood, an utter foe to smarting.

Had Jaffier's wife prov'd kind, he'd still been true.

Faugh how that stinks! thou die, thou kill my friend!

Or thou! or thou! with that lean wither'd face,

Away, disperse all to your several charges,

And meet to-morrow where your honour calls you.

I'll bring that man, whose blood you so much thirst
for,

And you shall see him venture for you fairly—

Hence! hence, I say.

[*Exit Renault angrily.*]

Spi. I fear we've been to blame,
And done too much.

The. " 'Twas too far urg'd against the man you
lov'd.

Rev. " Here take our swords, and crush them with
your feet."

Spi. Forgive us, gallant friend.

Pier. Nay, now you've found
The way to melt, and cast me as you will.
" I'll fetch this friend, and give him to your mercy :
" Nay, he shall die, if you will take him from me.
" For your repose, I'll quit my heart's best jewel ;
" But would not have him torn away by villains,
" And spiteful villany.

Spi. " No, may you both
" For ever live, and fill the world with fame. 220

Pier. " Now y'are too kind." Whence rose all this
discord ?

Oh, what a dangerous precipice have we 'scap'd !
How near a fall was all we'd long been building !
What an eternal blot had stain'd our glories,
If one, the bravest and the best of men,
Had fall'n a sacrifice to rash suspicion,
Butcher'd by those, whose cause he came to cherish !
" Oh ! could you know him all, as I have known him ;
" How good he is, how just, how true, how brave,
" You would not leave this place till you had seen
him ;
" Humbled yourselves before him, kiss'd his feet,
" And gain'd remission for the worst of follies."

Come but to-morrow, all your doubts shall end,
And to your loves, me better recommend,
That I've preserv'd your fame, and sav'd my friend.

[*Exeunt.*]

ÆT IV. SCENE I.

The Rialto. Enter JAFFIER and BELVIDERA.

Jaffier.

WHERE dost thou lead me? Every step I move,
Methinks I tread upon some mangled limb
Of a rack'd friend. Oh, my charming ruin!
Where are we wandering?

Bel. To eternal honour.

To do a deed shall chronicle thy name
Among the glorious legends of those few
That have sav'd sinking nations. Thy renown
Shall be the future song of all the virgins,
Who by thy piety have been preserv'd
From horrid violation. Every street
Shall be adorn'd with statues to thy honour;
And at thy feet this great inscription written,
Remember him that propp'd the fall of Venice.

Jaf. Rather, remember him, who, after all
The sacred bonds of oaths, and holier friendship,
In fond compassion to a woman's tears,
Forgot his manhood, virtue, truth, and honour,
To sacrifice the bosom that reliev'd him.
Why wilt thou damn me?

Bel. Oh, inconstant man!

How will you promise ; how will you deceive !
Do, return back, replace me in my bondage,
Tell all thy friends how dangerously thou lov'st me,
And let thy dagger do its bloody office.
“ Oh ! that kind dagger, Jaffier, how 'twill look
“ Struck thro' my heart, drench'd in my blood to
th' hilt ;
“ Whilst these poor dying eyes shall with their tears
“ No more torment thee , then thou wilt be free : ”
Or if thou think'st it nobler, let me live,
Till I'm a victim to the hateful lust
Of that infernal devil, “ that old fiend,
“ That's damn'd himself, and would undo mankind.”
Last night, my love !

Jaf. Name it not again :

It shews a beastly image to my fancy,
Will wake me into madness. “ Oh, the villain !
“ That durst approach such purity as thine
“ On terms so vile : ” Destruction, swift destruction,
Fall on my coward head, “ and make my name 40
“ The common scorn of fools,” if I forgive him :
“ If I forgive him ! If I not revenge
“ With utmost rage, and most unstaying fury,
“ Thy sufferings, thou dear darling of my life.

Bel. Delay no longer then, but to the senate,
And tell the dismal'st story ever utter'd :
Tell 'em what bloodshed, rapines, desolations,
Have been prepar'd : how near's the fatal hour.
Save thy poor country, save the reverend blood

Of all its nobles, which to-morrow's dawn
Must else see shed. " Save the poor tender lives
" Of all those little infants, which the swords
" Of murderers are whetting for, this moment.
" Think thou already hear'st their dying screams;
" Think that thou see'st their sad distracted mothers,
" Kneeling before thy feet, and begging pity :
" With torn dishevel'd hair, and streaming eyes,
" Their naked mangled breasts, besmear'd with blood;
" And even the milk, with which their fondled babes
" Softly they hush'd, dropping in anguish from 'em :
" Think thou seest this, and then consult thy heart.

Jaf. Oh !

Bel. Think too, if you lose this present minute,
" What miseries the next day brings upon thee :
" Imagine all the horrors of that night ;
" Murder and rapine, waste and desolation,
" Confus'dly raging : " Think what then may prove
My lot ; the ravisher may then come safe,
And, 'midst the terror of the public ruin,
Do a damn'd deed ; " perhaps may lay a train
" To catch thy life : Then where will be revenge,
" The dear revenge that's due to such a wrong ? "

Jaf. By all Heaven's powers, prophetic truth dwells
in thee ;

For every word thou speak'st, strikes thro' my heart,
" Like a new light, and shews it, how 't has wander'd,"

Just what thou 'st made me, take me, Belvidera,
And lead me to the place where I'm to say

This bitter lesson; where I must betray
My truth, my virtue, constancy, and friends.
Must I betray my friend? Ah! take me quickly;
Secure me well before that thought's renew'd; 81
If I relapse once more, all's lost for ever.

Bel. Hast thou a friend more dear than Belvidera?

Jaf. No; thou'rt my soul itself; wealth, friendship,
honour,

All present joys, and earnest of all future,
Are summ'd in thee. "Methinks, when in thy arms,
"Thus leaning on thy breast, one minute's more
"Than a long thousand years of vulgar hours.
"Why was such happiness not given me pure?
"Why dash'd with cruel wrongs, and bitter warnings?"

Come, lead me forward, now, like a tame lamb
To sacrifice. Thus, in his fatal garlands
Deck'd fine and pleas'd, the wanton skips and plays,
Trots by th'enticing flatt'ring priestess' side,
And much transported with its little pride,
Forgets his dear companions of the plain;
Till, by her bound, he's on the altar lain,
Yet then too hardly bleats, such pleasure's in the pain.

Enter Officer and six Guards.

Off. Stand! who goes there?

Bel. Friends.

100

"*Jaf.* Friends, Belvidera! Hide me from my
friends:

“ By Heav’n, I’d rather see the face of hell,

“ Than meet the man I love.”

Off. But what friends are you?

Bel. Friends to the senate, and the state of Venice.

Off. My orders are to seize on all I find

At this late hour, and bring ‘em to the council,

Who are now sitting.

Jaf. Sir, you shall be obey’d,

“ Hold, brute, stand off! none of your paws upon
me.”

Now the lot’s cast, and, fate, do what thou wilt.

[*Exeunt guarded.*]

SCENE II.

The Senate-House, where appear sitting the Duke of VENICE, PRIULI, ANTONIO, and eight other Senators.

Duke. Antony, Priuli, senators of Venice,
Speak, why are we assembled here this night?
What have you to inform us of, concerns
The state of Venice’ honour, or its safety?

Pri. Could words express the story I’ve to tell you,
Fathers, these tears were useless, these sad tears
That fall from my old eyes; but there is cause
We all should weep, tear off these purple robes, 120
And wrap ourselves in sackcloth, sitting down
On the sad earth, and cry aloud to Heav’n:
Heav’n knows, if yet there be an hour to come
Ere Venice be no more.

All Sen. How!

Pri. Nay, we stand
Upon the very brink of gaping ruin.
Within this city's form'd a dark conspiracy
To massacre us all, our wives and children,
Kindred and friends, our palaces and temples
To lay in ashes : nay, the hour too fix'd ;
The swords, for ought I know, drawn e'en this mo-
ment,
And the wild waste begun. From unknown hands .
I had this warning ; but, if we are men,
Let's not be tamely butcher'd, but do something
That may inform the world, in after ages,
Our virtue was not ruin'd, tho' we were.

[*A noise without.*

Room, room, make room for some prisoners—

“ *Sen.* Let's raise the city.”

Enter Officer and Guards.

Duke. Speak, there. What disturbance ?

Off. Two prisoners have the guards seiz'd in the
street,

140

Who say, they come t' inform this reverend senate
About the present danger.

Enter JAFFIER and Officer.

All. Give 'em entrance—Well, who are you ?

Jaf. A villain.

“ *Ant.* Short and pithy :”

The man speaks well.

Jaf. Would every man, that hears me,
Would deal so honestly, and own his title.

Duke. 'Tis rumour'd, that a plot has been contriv'd
Against this state ; and you've a share in't too.
If you are a villain, to redeem your honour
Unfold the truth, and be restor'd with mercy.

Jaf. Think not, that I to save my life came hither ;
I know its value better ; but in pity
To all those wretches, whose unhappy dooms
Are fix'd and seal'd. You see me here before you,
The sworn and covenanted foe of Venice :
But use me as my dealings may deserve,
And I may prove a friend.

Duke. The slave capitulates, 160
Give him the tortures.

Jaf. That you dare not do :
Your fear won't let you, not the longing itch
To hear a story which you dread the truth of :
Truth, which the fear of smart shall ne'er get from
me.

Cowards are scar'd with threat'nings ; boys are whipt
Into confessions : but a steady mind

Acts of itself, ne'er asks the body counsel.
Give him the tortures ! Name but such a thing
Again, by heav'n I'll shut these lips for ever.
Not all your racks, your engines, or your wheels,
Shall force a groan away, that you may guess at.

Ant. A bloody-minded fellow, I'll warrant ;
“ A damn'd bloody-minded fellow.”

Duke. Name your conditions.

Jaf. For myself full pardon,
Besides the lives of two and twenty friends,
Whose names are here enroll'd—Nay, let their crimes
Be ne'er so monstrous, I must have the oaths
And sacred promise of this reverend council, 180
That, in a full assembly of the senate
The thing I ask be ratify'd. Swear this,
And I'll unfold the secret of your danger.

“*All.* We'll swear.”

Duke. Propose the oath.

Jaf. By all the hopes
Ye have of peace and happiness hereafter,
Swear.

“*All.* We all swear.

“*Jaf.* To grant me what I've ask'd,”
Ye swear?

All. We swear.

Jaf. And, as ye keep the oath,
May you, and your posterity be bless'd,
Or curs'd for ever.

All. Else be curs'd for ever.

Jaf. Then here's the list, and with't the full dis-
close

Of all that threatens you. [*Delivers a paper.*
Now, fate, thou hast caught me. 199

“*Ant.* Why, what a dreadful catalogue of cut-
throats is here! I'll warrant you, not one of these
fellows but has a face like a lion. I dare not so
much as read their names over.”

Duke. Give order that all diligent search be made
To seize these men, their characters are public ;
The paper intimates their rendezvous
To be at the house of a fam'd Grecian courtesan,
Call'd Aquilina ; see that place secur'd.

“ *Ant.* What, my Nicky Nacky ! Hurry, durry !
“ Nicky Nacky, in the plot—I'll make a speech :

“ Most noble senators,

“ What headlong apprehensions drive you on,

“ Right, noble, wise, and truly solid senators,

“ To violate the laws and rights of nations ?

“ The lady is a lady of renown ;

“ 'Tis true, she holds a house of fair reception,

“ And, tho' I say't myself, as many more

“ Can say, as well as I—

“ *2 Sen.* My lord, long speeches

“ Are frivolous here, when dangers are so near us.

“ We all well know your interest in that lady ; 221

“ The world talks loud on't.

“ *Ant.* Verily I have done ;

“ I say no more.

“ *Duke.* But, since he has declar'd

“ Himself concern'd, pray, Captain, take great caution

“ To treat the fair-one as becomes her character ;

“ And let her bed-chamber be search'd with decency.”

You, Jaffier, must with patience bear till morning
To be our prisoner.

Jaf. Would the chains of death

Had bound me safe, e'er I had known this minute.

" I've done a deed will make my story hereafter

" Quoted in competition with all ill ones :

" The history of my wickedness shall run

" Down thro' the low traditions of the vulgar,

" And boys be taught to tell the tale of Jaffier."

Duke. Captain, withdraw your prisoner.

Jaf. Sir, if possible,

239

Lead me where my own thoughts themselves may lose
me ;

Where I may doze out what I've left of life,

Forget myself, and this day's guilt and falsehood.

Cruel remembrance, how shall I appease thee ?

[*Exit guarded.*]

Off. [*Without.*] More traitors ; room, room, room,
make room there.

Duke. How's this ? guards !

Where are our guards ? Shut up the gates, the trea-
son's

Already at our doors.

Enter Officer.

Off. My lords, more traitors,
Seiz'd in the very act of consultation ;
Furnish'd with arms and instruments of mischief.
Bring in the prisoners.

*Enter PIERRE, RENAULT, THEODORE, ELIOT, RE-
VELLIDO, and other Conspirators, in fetters.*

Pier. You, my lords, and fathers,
(As you are pleas'd to call yourselves) of Venice ;
If you sit here to guide the course of justice,

Why these disgraceful chains, upon the limbs
That have so often labour'd in your service ?
Are these the wreaths of triumph ye bestow
On those, that bring you conquest home, and
honours ?

Duke. Go on ; you shall be heard, Sir.

“ *Ant.* And be hang'd too, I hope.” 260

Pier. Are these the trophies I've deserv'd for fighting
Your battles with confederated powers ?
When winds and seas conspir'd to overthrow you ;
And brought the fleets of Spain to your own harbours ;
When you, great Duke, shrink trembling in your
palace,

And saw your wife, the Adriatic, plough'd,
Like a lewd whore, by bolder prows than yours,
Stepp'd not I forth, and taught your loose Venetians
The task of honour, and the way to greatness ?
Rais'd you from your capitulating fears
To stipulate the terms of su'd-for peace ?
And this my recompence ! if I'm a traitor,
Produce my charge ; or shew the wretch that's base
And brave enough, to tell me I'm a traitor.

Duke. Know you one Jaffier ? [*Consp. murmur.*]

Pier. Yes, and know his virtue.

His justice, truth, his general worth, and sufferings
From a hard father taught me first to love him.

Enter JAFFIER guarded.

Duke. See him brought forth.

Pier. My friend too bound ! nay then 280

Our fate has conquer'd us, and we must fall.
Why droops the man whose welfare's so much mine,
They're but one thing? These reverend tyrants, Jaffier,
Call us traitors. Art thou one, my brother?

Jaf. To thee, I am the falsest, veriest slave,
That e'er betray'd a generous, trusting friend,
And gave up honour to be sure of ruin.
All our fair hopes, which morning was t' have
crown'd,

Has this curs'd tongue o'erthrown.

Pier. So, then all's over:
Venice has lost her freedom, I my life.
No more! Farewel!

Duke. Say; will you make confession
Of your vile deeds, and trust the senate's mercy?

Pier. Curs'd be your senate: curs'd your constitu-
tion:

The curse of growing factions and divisions,
Still vex your councils, shake your public safety,
And make the robes of government you wear,
Hateful to you, as these base chains to me.

Duke. Pardon, or death?

Pier. Death! honourable death! 300

Ren. Death's the best thing we ask, or you can
give,

No shameful bonds, but honourable death.

Duke. Break up the council. Captain, guard your
prisoners.

Jaffier, you're free, but these must wait for judgment.

[*Ex. all the Senators.*]

Pier. Come, where's my dungeon? Lead me to my straw:

It will not be the first time I've lodg'd hard
To do the senate service.

Jaf. Hold, one moment.

Pier. Who's he disputes the judgment of the senate?
Presumptuous rebel—on— [Strikes Jaffier.

Jaf. By Heav'n, you stir not!
I must be heard; I must have leave to speak.
Thou hast disgrac'd me, Pierre, by a vile blow:
Had not a dagger done thee nobler justice?
But use me as thou wilt, thou can'st not wrong me,
For I am fallen beneath the basest injuries:
Yet look upon me with an eye of mercy,
With pity and with charity behold me;
"Shut not thy heart against a friend's repentance;"
But, as there dwells a godlike nature in thee, 320
Listen with mildness to my supplications.

Pier. What whining monk art thou? what holy
cheat,
That would'st inroach upon my credulous ears,
And cant'st thus vilely? Hence! I know thee not;
"Dissemble and be nasty." Leave, hypocrite.

Jaf. Not know me, Pierre!

Pierre No, I know thee not! What art thou?

Jaf. Jaffier, thy friend, thy once lov'd valu'd friend!
Tho' now deserv'dly scorn'd, and us'd most hardly.

Pier. Thou Jaffier! thou, my once lov'd valu'd
friend!

By Heav'ns thou ly'st; the man so call'd, my friend,

Was generous, honest, faithful, just, and valiant ;
Noble in mind, and in his person lovely ;
Dear to my eyes, and tender to my heart :
But thou, a wretched, base, false, worthless coward,
Poor, even in soul, and loathsome in thy aspect ;
All eyes must shun thee, and all hearts detest thee.
Prithce avoid ; nor longer cling thus round me,
Like something baneful, that my nature's chill'd at.

Jaf. I have not wrong'd thee, by these tears I
have not, 340

“ But still am honest, true, and, hope too, valiant ;
“ My mind still full of thee, therefore still noble.
“ Let not thy eyes then shun me, nor thy heart
“ Detest me utterly. Oh ! look upon me,
“ Look back, and see my sad, sincere submission !
“ How my heart swells, as e'en 'twould burst my bosom ;
“ Fond of its goal, and labouring to be at thee.
“ What shall I do ? what say, to make thee hear me ?

Pier. Hast thou not wrong'd me ? Dar'st thou call
thyself

That once lov'd, valu'd friend of mine,
And swear thou hast not wrong'd me ? Whence these
chains ?

Whence the vile death which I may meet this moment ?
Whence this dishonour, but from thee, thou false one ?

Jaf. All's true ; yet grant one thing, and I've done
asking.

Pier. What's that ?

Jaf. To take thy life, on such conditions
The council have propos'd : thou, and thy friends,
May yet live long, and to be better treated.

Pier. Life! ask my life ! Confess ! record myself
A villain, for the privilege to breathe ! 360
And carry up and down this cursed city,
A discontented and repining spirit,
Burthensome to itself, a few years longer ;
To lose it, may be, at last, in a lewd quarrel
For some new friend, treacherous and false as thou art !
No, this vile world and I have long been jangling,
And cannot part on better terms than now,
When only men, like thee, are fit to live in't.

Jaf. By all that's just——

Pier. Swear by some other powers,
For thou hast broke that sacred oath too lately.

Jaf. Then, by that hell I merit, I'll not leave thee,
Till, to thyself, at least thou'rt reconcil'd,
However thy resentment deal with me.

Pier. Not leave me !

Jaf. No ; thou shalt not force me from thee.
Use me reproachfully, and like a slave ;
Tread on me, buffet me, heap wrongs on wrongs
On my poor head ; I'll bear it all with patience
Shall weary out thy most unfriendly cruelty : 380
Lie at thy feet, and kiss 'em, tho' they spurn me ;
Till wounded by my sufferings, thou relent,
And raise me to thy arms, with dear forgiveness.

Pier. Art thou not——

Jaf. What ?

Pier. A traitor ?

Jaf. Yes.

Pier. A villain.

Jaf. Granted.

Pier. A coward, a most scandalous coward;
Spitiless, void of honour ; one who has sold
Thy everlasting fame, for shameless life !

Jaf. All, all, and more, much more : my faults
are numberless.

Pier. And would'st thou have me live on terms
like thine ?

Base, as thou'rt false——

Jaf. No ; 'tis to me that's granted :
The safety of thy life was all I aim'd at,
In recompence for faith and trust so broken.

Pier. I scorn it more, because preserv'd by thee ;
And, as when first my foolish heart took pity 400
On thy misfortunes, sought thee in thy miseries,
Reliev'd thy wants, and rais'd thee from the state
Of wretchedness, in which thy fate had plung'd thee,
To rank thee in my list of noble friends ;
All I receiv'd, in surety for thy truth,
Were unregarded oaths, and this, this dagger,
Giv'n with a worthless pledge, thou since hast stol'n :
So I restore it back to thee again ;
Swearing by all those pow'rs which thou hast violated,
Never from this curs'd hour to hold communion,
Friendship, or interest, with thee, tho' our years
Were to exceed those limited the world.
Take it—farewel—for now I owe thee nothing.

Jaf. Say thou wilt live then.

Pier. For my life, dispose it
Just as thou wilt, because 'tis what I'm tir'd with.

Jaf. Oh, Pierre!

Pier. No more.

Jaf. My eyes won't lose the sight of thee,
But languish after thee, and ache with gazing. 420

Pier. Leave me—Nay, then thus, thus I throw thee
from me;

And curses, great as is thy falshood, catch thee. [*Ex.*

Jaf. Amen.

He's gone, my father, friend, preserver,
And here's the portion he has left me :

[*Holds the dagger up.*

This dagger. Well remember'd! with this dagger,
I gave a solemn vow of dire importance ;
Parted with this, and Belvidera together.
Have a care, mem'ry, drive that thought no farther :
No, I'll esteem it, as a friend's last legacy ;
Treasure it up within this wretched bosom,
Where it may grow acquainted with my heart,
That when they meet, they start not from each other.
So now for thinking—A blow, call'd traitor, villain,
Coward, dishonourable coward ; fough !
“ Oh ! for a long sound sleep, and so forget it.”
Down, busy devil !

Enter BELVIDERA.

Bel. Whither shall I fly ?
Where hide me and my miseries together ?

Where's now the Roman constancy I boasted ? 440
Sunk into trembling fears and desperation,
Not daring to look up to that dear face
Which us'd to smile, ev'n on my faults ; but, down,
Bending these miserable eyes on earth,
Must move in penance, and implore much mercy.

Jaf. Mercy ! kind Heav'n has surely endless stores,
Hoarded for thee, of blessings yet untasted :

“ Let wretches, loaded hard with guilt, as I am,
“ Bow with the weight, and groan beneath the bur-
then,

“ Creep with a remnant of that strength they've left

“ Before the footstool of that Heav'n they've injur'd.

Oh, Belvidera ! I'm the wretched'st creature

E'er crawl'd on earth. “ Now, if thou'st virtue, help
me

“ Take me into thy arms, and speak the words of
peace

“ To my divided soul, that wars within me,

“ And raises every sense to my confusion :

“ By Heav'n, I'm tottering on the very brink

“ Of peace, and thou art all the hold I've left.

“ *Bel.* Alas ! I know thy sorrows are most mighty :

“ I know thou'st cause to mourn, to mourn, my
Jaffier, 460

“ With endless cries, and neyer-ceasing wailing :

“ Thou'st lost——

“ *Jaf.* Oh ! I have lost what can't be counted ;”
My friend too, Belvidera, that dear friend,
Who, next to thee, was all my health rejoic'd in,

Has us'd me like a slave, shamefully us'd me :
 'Twould break thy pitying heart to hear the story.

“ What shall I do ? Resentment, indignation,
 “ Love, pity, fear, and mem'ry how I've wrong'd him
 “ Distract my quiet with the very thought on't,
 “ And tear my heart to pieces in my bosom.

Bel. What has he done ?

“ *Jaf.* Thou'dst hate me, should I tell thee.

“ *Bel.* Why ?

“ *Jaf.* Oh ! he has us'd me ! yet, by Heav'n, I bear
 it ;

“ He has us'd me, Belvidera, but first swear,
 “ That when I've told thee, thou wilt not loath me
 utterly,

“ Tho' vilest blots, and stains appear upon me ;
 “ But still, at least with charitable goodness,
 “ Be near me in the pangs of my affliction ; 480
 “ Nor scorn me, Belvidera, as he has done.

“ *Bel.* Have I then e'er been false, that now I'm
 doubted ?

“ Speak, what's the cause I'm grown into distrust ?
 “ Why thought unfit to hear my love's complaining ?

“ *Jaf.* Oh !

“ *Bel.* Tell me.

“ *Jaf.* Bear my failings, for they're many.

“ Oh, my dear angel ! in that friend, I've lost
 “ All my soul's peace ; for ev'ry thought of him
 “ Strikes my sense hard, and deads it in my brains !
 “ Would'st thou believe it ?

“ *Bel.* Speak.

Jaf. Before we parted,
E're yet his guards had led him to his prison,
Full of severest sorrows for his sufferings,
With eyes o'erflowing, and a bleeding heart,
" Humbling myself, almost beneath my nature,
As at his feet I kneel'd and su'd for mercy,
" Forgetting all our friendship, all the dearness,
" In which we've liv'd so many years together, 500
With a reproachful hand he dash'd a blow :
He struck me, Belvidera! by Heav'n, he struck me!
Buffeted, call'd me traitor, villain, coward.
Am I a Coward? Am I a villain? Tell me:
Thou'rt the best judge, and mad'st me, if I am so?
Damnation! Coward!

Bel. Oh! forgive him, Jaffier;
And, if his sufferings wound thy heart already,
What will they do to-morrow?

Jaf. Ah!

Bel. To-morrow,
When thou shalt see him stretch'd in all the agonies
Of a tormenting and a shameful death;
His bleeding bowels, and his broken limbs,
Insulted o'er, by a vile butchering villain;
What will thy heart do then? Oh! sure 'twill stream,
Like my eyes now.

Jaf. What means thy dreadful story?
Death, and tomorrow! Broken limbs and bowels!
" Insulted o'er by a vile butchering villain! 520
" By all my fears, I shall start out to madness

“ With barely guessing, if the truth's hid longer.”

Bel. The faithless senators, 'tis they've decreed it :
They say, according to our friends' request,
They shall have death, and not ignoble bondage :
Declare their promis'd mercy all as forfeited :
False to their oaths, and deaf to intercession,
Warrants are pass'd for public death tomorrow.

Jaf. Death! doom'd to die! condemn'd unheard!
unpleaded!

Bel. Nay, cruel'st racks and torments are preparing
To force confession from their dying pangs.
Oh! do not look so terribly upon me!
How your lips shake, and all your face disorder'd!
What means my love?

Jaf. Leave me, I charge thee, leave me——Strong
temptations
Wake in my heart.

Bel. For what?

Jaf. No more, but leave me.

Bel. Why?

Jaf. Oh! by Heav'n, I love thee with that fondness,
I would not have thee stay a moment longer
Near these curs'd hands: Are they not cold upon thee?

*[Pulls the Dagger half out of his Bosom,
and puts it back again.]*

Bel. No, everlasting comfort's in thy arms.
To lean thus on thy breast, is softer ease
Than downy pillows, deck'd with leaves of roses.

Jaf. Alas! thou think'st not of the thorns 'tis fill'd
with:

Fly, e'er they gall thee. There's a lurking serpent
Ready to leap, and sting thee to the heart :
Art thou not terrify'd?

Bel. No.

Jaf. Call to mind
What thou hast done, and whither thou hast brought
me.

Bel. Hahl

Jaf. Where's my friend? my friend, thou smiling
mischief!
Nay, shrink not, now 'tis too late; "thou should'st
have fled
"When thy guilt first had cause;" for dire revenge
Is up, and raging for my friend. He groans!
Hark, how he groans! his screams are in my ears
Already; see, they've fix'd him on the wheel,
And now they tear him—Murder! Perjur'd senate!
Murder—Oh!—Hark thee, traitress, thou hast done
this!

Thanks to thy tears, and false persuading love.
How her eyes speak! Oh, thou bewitching creature!

[Fumbling for his dagger.]

Madness can't hurt thee. Come, thou little trembler,
Creep even into my heart, and there lie safe;
'Tis thy own citadel—Hah—yet stand off.
Heav'n must have justice, "and my broken vows
"Will sink me else beneath its reaching mercy."
I'll wink, and then 'tis done——

Bel. What means the lord
Of me, my life, and love? What's in thy bosom,

Thou grasp'st at so ? "Nay, why am I thus treated ?

[Draws the dagger and offers to stab her.]

"What wilt thou do ?" Ah ! do not kill me, Jaffier :

"Pity these panting breasts, and trembling limbs,

"That us'd to clasp thee when thy looks were milder,

"That yet hang heavy on my unpurg'd soul ;

"And plunge it not into eternal darkness.

Jaf. Know, Belvidera, when we parted last,

I gave this dagger with thee, as in trust,

To be thy portion if I e'er prov'd false. 590

On such condition, was my truth believ'd :

But now 'tis forfeited, and must be paid for.

[Offers to stab her again.]

Bel. Oh ! Mercy !

[Kneeling.]

Jaf. Nay, no struggling.

Bel. Now then, kill me,

[Leaps on his neck, and kisses him.]

While thus I cling about thy cruel neck,

Kiss thy revengeful lips, and die in joys

Greater than any I can guess hereafter.

Jaf. I am, I am, a coward, witness Heav'n,

Witness it, earth, and every being witness :

'Tis but one blow ! yet by immortal love,

I cannot longer bear a thought to harm thee.

[He throws away the dagger, and embraces her.]

The seal of Providence is sure upon thee ;

And thou wert born for yet unheard-of wonders.

Oh ! thou wert either born to save or damn me.

By all the power that's given me o'er my soul,

By thy resistless tears and conquering smiles,
 “ By the victorious love, that still waits on thee ;”
 Fly to thy cruel father, save my friend,
 Or all our future quiet’s lost for ever. 600
 Fall at his feet, cling round his rev’rend knees,
 Speak to him with thy eyes, and with thy tears,
 Melt his hard heart, and wake dead nature in him,
 Crush him in th’ arms, torture him with thy soft-
 ness ;
 Nor till thy prayers are granted, set him free,
 But conquer him, as thou hast conquer’d me.
[*Exeunt.*

ACT V. SCENE I.

An Apartment in Priuli's House. Enter PRIULI solus.

Prinzi

W'HY, cruel Heav'n, have my unhappy days
Been lengthen'd to this sad one? Oh! dishonour
And deathless infamy is fallen upon me.
Was it my fault? Am I a traitor? No.
But then, my only child, my daughter wedded;
There my best blood runs foul, and a disease
Incurable has seiz'd upon my memory,
To make it rot and stink to after-ages.
"Curst be the fatal minute when I got her;
"Or wou'd that I'd been any thing but man,

“ And rais’d an issue which would ne’er have wrong’d
me.

“ The miserable creatures (man excepted,

“ Are not the less esteem’d, tho’ their posterity

“ Degenerate from the virtues of their fathers :

“ The vilest beasts are happy in their offspring,

“ While only man gets traitors, whores, and villains.

“ Curs’d be the names, and some swift blow from
fate

“ Lay this head deep, where mine may be forgotten.”

Enter BELVIDERA, in a long mourning veil.

Bel. He’s there, my father, my inhuman father,
That for three years has left an only child 20

Expos’d to all the outrages of fate,

And cruel ruin!—oh——

Pri. What child of sorrow

Art thou, that comest wrapt in weeds of sadness,

And mov’st as if thy steps were tow’rds a grave?

Bel. A wretch who from the very top of happi-
ness

Am fall’n into the lowest depths of misery,

And want your pitying hand to raise me up again.

“ *Pri.* Indeed thou talk’st as thou hadst tasted
sorrows;

“ Would I could help thee !

“ *Bel.* Tis greatly in your power:

“ The world too speaks you charitable ; and I,

“ Who ne’er ask’d alms before, in that dear hope,

“ Am come a begging to you, Sir.

"For what?

"*Bel.* Oh! well regard me, is this voice a strange one?

"Consider too, when beggars once pretend

"A case like mine, no little will content 'em."

Pri. What would'st thou beg for?

Bel. Pity and forgiveness. [*Throws up her veil.*

By the kind tender names of child and father, 41

Hear my complaints, and take me to your love.

Pri. My daughter!

Bel. Yes, your daughter, "by a mother
"Virtuous and noble, faithful to your honour,
"Obedient to your will, kind to your wishes,
"Dear to your arms. By all the joys she gave you,
"When in her blooming years she was your treasure,
"Look kindly on me? In my face behold
"The lineaments of her's you've kiss'd so often,
"Pleading the cause of your poor cast-off child.

"*Pri.* Thou art my daughter.

"*Bel.* Yes"—and you've oft told me,
With smiles of love and chaste paternal kisses,
I'd much resemblance of my mother.

"*Pri.* Oh!

"Had'st thou inherited her matchless virtues,
"I'd been too bless'd.

"*Bel.* Nay, do not call to memory

"My disobedience; but let pity enter 60

"Into your heart, and quite deface th' impression.

"For could you think how mine's perplex'd, what
sadness,

“ Fears and despairs distract the peace within me,
 “ Oh! you would take me in your dear, dear arms,
 “ Hover with strong compassion o’er your young one,
 “ To shelter me with a protecting wing
 “ From the black gather’d storm, that’s just, just
 breaking.

Pri. Don’t talk thus.

Bel. Yes, I must; and you must hear too.

I have a husband.

Pri. Damn him.

Bel. Oh! do not curse him;

He would not speak so hard a word towards you
 On any terms, howe’er he deals with me.

Pri. Ha! what means my child?

“ *Bel.* Oh! there’s but this short moment
 “ ’Twixt me and fate: yet send me not with curses
 “ Down to my grave; afford me one kind blessing
 “ Before we part: just take me in your arms,
 “ And recommend me with a prayer to Heav’n, 80
 “ That I may die in peace; and when I’m dead—

“ *Pri.* How my soul’s catch’d!

“ *Bel.* Lay me, I beg you, lay me

“ By the dear ashes of my tender mother.

“ She would have pity’d me, had fate yet spar’d her.

“ *Pri.* By Heav’n, my aching heart forebodes much
 mischief!

“ Tell me thy story, for I’m still thy father.

“ *Bel.* No; I’m contented.

“ *Pri.* Speak.

“ *Bel.* No matter.

Pri. Tell me :

“ By yon bless'd Heav'n, my heart runs o'er with
fondness.

Bel. Oh !

Pri. Utter't.

Bel. Oh ! my husband, my dear husband,
Carries a dagger in his once kind bosom,
To pierce the heart of your poor Belvidera.

Pri. Kill thee !

Bel. Yes, kill me. When he pass'd his faith
And covenant against your state and senate, 100
He gave me up a hostage for his truth :
With me a dagger and a dire commission,
Whene'er he fail'd, to plunge it thro' this bosom.
I learnt the danger, chose the hour of love
T' attempt his heart, and bring it back to honour.
Great love prevail'd, and bless'd me with success !
He came, confess'd, betray'd his dearest friends
For promis'd mercy. Now they're doom'd to suffer,
Gall'd with remembrance of what then was sworn,
If they are lost, he vows t'appease the gods
With this poor life, and make my blood th' atonement.

Pri. Heav'ns !

“ *Bel.* Think you saw what pass'd at our last part-
ing :

“ Think you beheld him like a raging lion,

“ Pacing the earth, and tearing up his steps,

“ Fate in his eyes, and roaring with the pain

“ Of burning fury : think you saw his one hand

“ Fix'd on my throat, whilst the extended other

“ Grasp’d a keen threat’ning dagger : Oh! ’twas thus
“ We last embrac’d, when, trembling with revenge
“ He dragg’d me to the ground, and at my bosom
“ Presented horrid death. Cry’d out, my friends,
“ Where are my friends? swore, wept, rag’d, threat-
 en’d, lov’d,
“ For yet he lov’d, and that dear love preserv’d me
“ To this last trial of a father’s pity.
“ I fear not death ; but cannot bear a thought
“ That that dear hand should do th’ unfriendly of-
 fice.”

If I was ever then your care, now hear me ;
Fly to the senate, save the promis’d lives
Of his dear friends, ere mine be made the sacrifice.

Pri. Oh, my heart’s comfort !

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Bel. Will you not, my father?

Weep not, but answer me.

Pri. By Heav’n I will.

Not one of them but what shall be immortal.

Canst thou forgive me all my follies past?

I’ll henceforth be indeed a father ; never,

Never more thus expose, but cherish thee,

Dear as the vital warmth that feeds my life,

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Dear as these eyes that weep in fondness o’er thee :

Peace to thy heart. Farewel.

Bel. Go, and remember,

’Tis Belvidera’s life her father pleads for.

[*Exeunt severally.*]

Enter ANTONIO.

“ Hum, hum, ha !

“ Signor Priuli, my lord Priuli, my lord, my lord, my
“ lord. Now we lords love to call one another by
“ our titles. My lord, my lord, my lord,—Pox on
“ him, I am a lord as well as he. And so let him
“ fiddle—I’ll warrant him he’s gone to the senate-
“ house, and I’ll be there too, soon enough for some-
“ body. Odd—here’s a tickling speech about the plot ;
“ I’ll prove there’s a plot with a vengeance,—would
“ I had it without book ; let me see——

“ Most reverend senators,

“ That there is a plot, surely by this time no man
“ that hath eyes or understanding in his head, will
“ presume to doubt ; ’tis as plain as the light in the
“ cucumber—no—hold there—cucumber does not
“ come in yet—’tis as plain as the light in the sun, or
“ as the man in the moon, even at noon-day. It is,
“ indeed, a pumpkin-plot, which, just as it was mel-
“ low, we have gathered, and now we have gathered
“ it, prepared and dressed it, shall we throw it like a
“ pickled cucumber out of the window ? No : that it
“ is not only a bloody, horrid, execrable, damnable,
“ and audacious plot : but it is, as I may so say, a saucy
“ plot : and we all know, most reverend fathers ; that
“ which is sauce for a goose is sauce for a gander :
“ therefore, I say, as those blood-thirsty ganders of
“ the conspiracy would have destroyed us geese of
“ the senate, let us make haste to destroy them ; so I

“humbly move for hanging—Hah! hurry durry,—
 “I think this will do; though I was something out
 “at first, about the sun and the cucumber.

Enter AQUILINA.

“*Aqui.* Good morrow, senator.

“*Ant.* Nacky, my dear Nacky; morrow, Nacky;
 “odd I am very brisk, very merry, very pert, very
 “jovial—ha a a a a—kiss me, Nacky! how dost thou
 “do, my little tory rory strumpet? Kiss me, I say,
 “hussy, kiss me. 480

“*Aqui.* Kiss me, Nacky! hang you, Sir coxcomb;
 “hang you, Sir.

“*Ant.* Haity taity, is it so indeed? With all my
 “heart, faith—*Hey, then up go we.* Faith, *hey—then*
 “*up go we,* dum dum derum dump. [Sings

“*Aqui.* Signor.

“*Ant.* Madona.

“*Aqui.* Do you intend to die in your bed?

“*Ant.* About threescore years hence much may be
 “done, my dear.

“*Aqui.* You'll be hang'd, Signor.

“*Ant.* Hang'd, sweet-heart, pr'ythee be quiet;
 “hang'd quoth-a; that's a merry conceit with all my
 “heart; why thou jok'st, Nacky; thou art given to
 “joking, I'll swear. Well, I protest, Nacky, nay I
 “must protest, and will protest, that I love joking
 “dearly. And I love thee for joking, and I'll kiss
 “thee for joking, and towse thee for joking; and
 “odd, I have a devilish mind to take thee aside about

“ that business for joking too, odd I have ; and *Hey,*
“ *then up we go,* dum dum derum dump. [Sings.

“ *Aqui.* See you this, Sir ? [Draws a Dagger.

“ *Ant.* O laud, a dagger ! Oh, laud ! it is naturally
“ my aversion, I cannot endure the sight on’t ; hide
“ it for Heaven’s sake ; I cannot look that way till it
“ be gone—hide it, hide it, oh ! oh ! hide it.

“ *Aqui.* Yes, in your heart I’ll hide it.

“ *Ant.* My heart ! what hide a dagger in my heart’s
blood !

“ *Aqui.* Yes, in thy heart, thy throat, thou pam-
per’d devil ;

“ Thou hast help’d to spoil my peace, and I’ll have
vengeance

“ On thy curs’d life, for all the bloody senate,

“ The perjur’d faithless senate. Where’s my lord,

“ My happiness, my love, my god, my hero,

“ Doom’d by thy accursed tongue, among the rest,

“ T’a shameful rack ? By all the rage that’s in me,

“ I’ll be whole years in murdering thee.

“ *Ant.* Why, Nacky,

“ Wherefore so passionate ? What have I done ?

“ What’s the matter, my dear Nacky ? Am not I thy

“ love, thy happiness, thy lord, thy hero, thy senator,

“ and every thing in the world, Nacky ? 421

“ *Aqui.* Thou ! think’st thou, thou art fit to meet
my joys :

“ To bear the eager clasps of my embraces ?

“ Give me my Pierre, or—

- “ *Ant.* Why, he’s to be hang’d, little Nacky;
 “ Truss’d up for treason and so forth, child.
 “ *Aqui.* Thou ly’st; stop down thy throat that
 hellish sentence,
 “ Or ’tis thy last: swear that my love shall live,
 “ Or thou art dead.
 “ *Ant.* Ah! h h h.
 “ *Aqui.* Swear to recall his doom;
 “ Swear at my feet, and tremble at my fury.
 “ *Ant.* I do! Now if she would but kick a little
 “ bit: one kick now, Ah! h h h.
 “ *Aqui.* Swear or—
 “ *Ant.* I do by these dear fragrant foots and little
 “ toes, sweet as e e e e, my Nacky, Nacky, Nacky,
 “ faith and troth.
 “ *Aqui.* How! 439
 “ *Ant.* Nothing but untie thy shoe-strings a little,
 “ that’s all, that’s all, as I hope to live, Nacky, that’s
 “ all, all.
 “ *Aqui.* Nay, then—
 “ *Ant.* Hold; hold; thy love, thy lord, thy hero,
 “ shall be preserv’d and safe.
 “ *Aqui.* Or may this poniard
 “ Rust in thy heart.
 “ *Ant.* With all my soul.
 “ *Aqui.* Farewel. [Exit.
 “ *Ant.* Adieu. Why, what a bloody-minded, invete-
 “ rate, termagantstrumpet, have I been plagued with!
 “ Oh! h h! Yet no more! nay, then I die, I die—
 “ I’m dead already.” [Stretches himself out.

SCENE II.

A Garden. Enter JAFFIER.

Jaf. Final destruction seize on all the world.
Bend down ye heav'ns, and shutting round this earth,
Crush the vile globe into its first confusion
"Scorch it with elemental flames to one curs'd kindred;
"And all us little creepers in't, call'd men,
"Burn, burn to nothing: but let Venice burn,
"Hotter than all the rest: Here kindle hell, 460
"Ne'er to extinguish; and let souls hereafter
"Groan here, in all those pains which mine feels now."

Enter BELVIDERA.

Bel. My life——

[*Meeting him.*

Jaf. My plague——

[*Turning from her.*

Bel. Nay, then I see my ruin.

If I must die!

"*Jaf.* No, death's this day too busy;
"Thy father's ill-tim'd mercy came too late.
"I thank thee for thy labours though; and him too:
"But all my poor, betray'd, unhappy friends,
"Have summons to prepare for fate's black hour;
"And yet I live.
"*Bel.* Then be the next my doom:
"I see, thou hast pass'd my sentence in thy heart,
"And I'll no longer weep, or plead against it,
"But with the humblest, most obedient patience,

“ Meet thy dear hands and kiss ’em when they wound
me.

“ Indeed I’m willing, but I beg thee do it

“ With some remorse ; and when thou giv’st the
blow,

“ View me with eyes of a relenting love, 480

“ And shew me pity, for ’twill sweeten justice.”

Shew pity to thee !

“ *Bel.* Yes ; and when thy hands,

“ Charg’d with my fate, come trembling to the deed,

“ As thou hast done a thousand thousand times

“ To this poor breast, when kinder rage hath brought
thee,

“ When our stung hearts have leap’d to meet each
other,

“ And melting kisses seal’d our lips together ;

“ When joys have left me gasping in thy arms :

“ So let my death come now, and I’ll not shrink
from’t.”

Jaf. Nay, Belvidera, do not fear my cruelty,
Nor let the thoughts of death perplex thy fancy ;
But answer me to what I shall demand,
With a firm temper and unshaken spirit.

Bel. I will, when I’ve done weeping—

Jaf. Fie, no more on’t——

How long is’t since that miserable day
We wedded first.

Bel. Oh ! h h !

Jaf. Nay, keep in thy tears,
Lest they unman me too.

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Bel. Heav'n knows I cannot ;
The words you utter sound so very sadly,
The streams will follow—

Jaf. Come, I'll kiss 'em dry then.

Bel. But was't a miserable day ?

Jaf. A curs'd one.

Bel. I thought it otherwise ; and you've often sworn,
“ In the transporting hours of warmest love,
“ When sure you spoke the truth, you've sworn,
 you bless'd it.

Jaf. 'Twas a rash oath.

Bel. Then why am I not curs'd too ?

Jaf. No, Belvidera ; by th' eternal truth,
I doat with too much fondness.

Bel. Still so kind !

Still then do you love me ?

Jaf. “ Nature in her workings,
“ Inclines not with more ardour to creation,
“ Than I do now towards thee :” Man ne'er was
 bless'd,

Since the first pair met, as I have been. 520

Bel. Then sure you will not curse me ?

Jaf. No, I'll bless thee.

I came on purpose, Belvidera, to bless thee,
'Tis now, I think, three years, we've liv'd together.

Bel. And may no fatal minute ever part us,
Till, reverend grown for age and love, we go
Down to one grave, as our last bed, together ;
There sleep in peace, till an eternal morning.

“ *Jaf.* When will that be ? [Sighing.]

Bel. I hope, long ages hence.

Jaf. Have I not hitherto, (I beg thee tell me
 "Thy very fears) us'd thee with tender'st love ?
 "Did e'er my soul rise up in wrath against thee ?
 "Did I e'er frown when Belvidera smil'd ?
 "Or by the least unfriendly word, betray
 "Abating passion ? have I ever wrong'd thee ?

Bel. No.

Jaf. Has my heart, or have my eyes, e'er wander'd

"To any other woman ?

Bel. Never, never—I were the worst of false
 ones, should I accuse thee. 540

"I own, I've been too happy, bless'd above

"My sex's charter."

Jaf. Did I not say, I came to bless thee ?

Bel. You did.

Jaf. Then hear me, bounteous Heav'n :
 Pour down your blessings on this beauteous head,
 Where everlasting sweets are always springing,
 With a continual giving hand : let peace,
 Honour, and safety, always hover round her ;
 Feed her with plenty ; let her eyes ne'er see
 A sight of sorrow, nor her heart know mourning ?
 Crown all her days with joy, her nights with rest,
 Harmless as her own thoughts ; and prop her virtue,
 To bear the loss of one that too much lov'd ;
 And comfort her with patience in our parting.

Bel. How ! Parting, parting !

Jaf. Yes, for ever parting ;

I have sworn, Belvidera, by yon heav'n,
That best can tell how much I lose to leave thee,
We part this hour for ever. 560

Bel. O! call back

Your cruel blessing ; stay with me and curse me.

“ *Jaf.* No, 'tis resolv'd.

“ *Bel.* Then hear me too, just Heav'n :

“ Pour down your curses on this wretched head,

“ With never-ceasing vengeance ; let despair,

“ Danger and infamy, nay all, surround me ;

“ Starve me with wantings ; let my eyes ne'er see

“ A sight of comfort, nor my heart know peace :

“ But dash my days with sorrow, nights with horrors,

“ Wild as my own thoughts now, and let loose fury,

“ To make me mad enough for what I lose,

“ If I must lose him. If I must ? I will not.

“ Oh ! turn and hear me ?”

Jaf. Now hold, heart, or never.

Bel. By all the tender days we've liv'd together,

“ By all our charming nights, and joys that crown'd
‘em,”

Pity my sad condition ; speak, but speak,

Jaf. Oh ! h h !

Bel. By these arms, that now cling round thy neck,

“ By this dear kiss, and by ten thousand more,”

By these poor streaming eyes—

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Jaf. Murder ! unhold me :

By th' immortal destiny that doom'd me

[*Draws his dagger.*

To this curs'd minute, I'll not live one longer ;

Resolve to let me go, or see me fall——

Bel. Hold, Sir, be patient."

Jaf. Hark, the dismal bell [*Passing Bell tolls.*
Tolls out for death! I must attend its call too;
For my poor friend, my dying Pierre, expects me:
He sent a message to require I'd see him
Before he dy'd, and take his last forgiveness.
Farewel, for ever.

Bel. Leave thy dagger with me,
Bequeath me something—Not one kiss at parting;
Oh! my poor heart, when wilt thou break?

[*Going out, looks back at him*

Jaf. Yet stay:
We have a child, as yet a tender infant;
Be a kind mother to him when I'm gone;
Breed him in virtue, and the paths of honour, 600
But never let him know his father's story;
I charge thee, guard him from the wrongs my fate
May do his future fortune, or his name.

Now—nearer yet— [*Approaching each other.*
Oh! that my arms were rivetted
Thus round thee ever! But my friend! my oath!
This, and no more. [*Kisses her.*

Bel. Another, sure another,
For that poor little one you've ta'en such care of,
I'll giv't him truly.

Jaf. So now farewel.

Bel. For ever?

Jaf. Heav'n knows for ever; all good angels guard
thee. [*Exit.*

Bel. All ill ones sure had charge of me this moment.

Curs'd be my days, and doubly curs'd my nights,
" Which I must now mourn out in widow'd tears ;
" Blasted be every herb, and fruit, and tree ;
" Curs'd be the rain that falls upon the earth,
" And may the general curse reach man and beast."
Oh! give me daggers, fire or water : 600
How I could bleed, how burn, how drown, the waves
Huzzing and booming round my sinking head.
Till I descended to the peaceful bottom !
Oh! there's all quiet, here all rage and fury :
The air's too thin, and pierces my weak brain ;
I long for thick substantial sleep : Hell ! hell !
Burst from the centre, rage and roar aloud,
If thou art half so hot, so mad as I am.

" Enter PRIULI, and Servants.

- " Who's there ? [They seize her.
" Pri. Run, seize, and bring her safely home ;
" Guard her as you would life : Alas, poor creature !
" Bel. What to my husband ! then conduct me
quickly ;
" Are all things ready ; Shall we die most gloriously ?
" Say not a word of this to my old father :
" Murmuring streams, soft shades, and springing
flowers !
" Lutes, laurels, seas of milk, and ships of amber.
[Exeunt.
-

SCENE III.

Opening, discovers a scaffold, and a wheel prepared for the Execution of PIERRE; then enter Officer, PIERRE, and Guards, "a Friar," Executioner, and a great Rabble.

"Off. Room, room there—stand all by, make
"room for the prisoner."

Pier. My friend not come yet ?

"*Fri.* Why are you so obstinate ? 640

"*Pier.* Why you so troublesome, that a poor
wretch can't die in peace,

"But you, like ravens, will be croaking round him—

"*Fri.* Yet Heav'n——

"*Pier.* I tell thee, Heav'n and I are friends :

"I ne'er broke peace with't yet, by cruel murders,

"Rapine, or perjury, or vile deceiving ;

"But liv'd in moral justice towards all men :

"Nor am a foe to the most strong believers,

"Howe'er my own short-sighted faith confine me.

"*Fri.* But an all-seeing judge——

"*Pier.* You say my conscience

"Must be my accuser ; I have search'd that con-
science,

"And find no records there of crimes that scare me.

"*Fri.* 'Tis strange, you should want faith.

"*Pier.* You want to lead

"My reason blind-fold, like a hamper'd lion,

"Check'd of it's nobler vigour ; then when baited

Jaf. Yes, I will live :
But it shall be to see thy fall reveng'd
At such a rate, as Venice long shall groan for.

Pier. Wilt thou ?

Jaf. I will, by Heav'n.

Pier. Then still thou'rt noble,
And I forgive thee. Oh !—yet—shall I trust thee ?

Jaf. No ; I've been false already.

Pier. Dost thou love me ?

Jaf. Rip up my heart, and satisfy thy doubtings.

Pier. Curse on this weakness. [*He weeps.*]

Jaf. Tears ! Amazement ! Tears !

I never saw thee melted thus before ;
And know there's something labouring in thy bosom,
That must have vent : Tho' I'm a villain, tell me.

Pier. See'st thou that engine ? [*Pointing to the Wheel.*]

Jaf. Why ?

Pier. Is't fit a soldier, who has liv'd with honour,
Fought nation's quarrels, and been crown'd with conquest,
Be expos'd a common carcase on a wheel ?

Jaf. Hah !

Pier. Speak ! is't fitting ?

Jaf. Fitting !

Pier. Yes ; is't fitting ?

Jaf. What's to be done ?

Pier. I'd have thee undertake
Something that's noble, to preserve my memory
From the disgrace that's ready to attain it.

Off. The day grows late, Sir.

Pier. I'll make haste. Oh, Jaffier!
Thou' thou'st betray'd me, do me some way justice.

Jaf. No more of that : thy wishes shall be satisfied ;
I have a wife, and she shall bleed : my child too,
Yield up his little throat, and all
T' appease thee——

[*Going away, Pierre holds him.*]

Pier. No—this—no more. [*He whispers Jaffier.*]

Jaf. Hah! is't then so?

Pier. Most certainly.

Jaf. I'll do it.

Pier. Remember.

Off. Sir.

Pier. Come, now I'm ready,

[*He and Jaffier ascend the scaffold.*]

Captain, you should be a gentleman of honour ;
Keep off the rabble that I may have room
To entertain my fate, and die with decency.
Come.

[*Takes off his gown, executioner prepares to bind him.*]

" *Fri.* Son.

" *Pier.* Hence, tempter.

" *Off.* Stand off, priest.

" *Pier.* I thank you, Sir."

[*To the Officer.*]

You'll think on't?

[*To Jaffier.*]

Jaf. 'Twon't grow stale before to-morrow.

Pier. Now, Jaffier! now I'm going. Now—

[*Executioner having bound him.*]

Jaf. Have at thee,

Thou honest heart, then—here

[*Stabs him.*]

And this is well too.

[*Stabs himself*]

“*Fri.* Damnable deed!”

Pier. Now thou hast indeed been faithful.

This was done nobly—We have deceiv’d the senate.

Jaf. Bravely.

Pier. Ha, ha, ha——oh! oh!

[*Dies*]

Jaf. Now, ye curs’d rulers,

Thus of the blood y’ave shed, I make libation

And sprinkle it mingling. May it rest upon you,

And all your race. Be henceforth peace a stranger

Within your walls; let plagues and famine waste

Your generation—Oh, poor Belvidera!

Sir, I have a wife, bear this in safety to her,

A token that with my dying breath I bless’d her,

And the dear little infant left behind me.

I’m sick—I’m quiet.

[*Dies.*]

“*Off.* Bear this news to the senate,

“And guard their bodies, till there’s further orders.

“Heav’n grant I die so well.” [*Scene shuts upon them.*]

Soft Music. Enter BELVIDERA *distracted, led by two of her Women, PRIULI and Servants.*

Pri. Strengthen her heart with patience, pitying
Heav’n.

Bel. Come, come, come, come, come, nay, come to
bed.

Pr’ythee, my love. The winds; hark how they
whistle;

And the rain beats: Oh! how the weather shrinks
me!

You are angry now, who cares ? Pish, no indeed,
 Chuse then ; I say you shall not go, you shall not ;
 Whip your ill-nature ; get you gone then ; Oh !
 Are you return'd ? See, father, here he's come again :
 Am I to blame to love him ? O, thou dear one,
 Why do you fly me ? Are you angry still then ?
 Jaffier, where art thou ? father why do you do thus ?
 Stand off, don't hide him from me. He's here some-
 where.

Stand off, I say : What gone ? Remember't, tyrant :
 I may revenge myself for this trick, one day.
 I'll do't—I'll do't. “ Renault's a nasty fellow ;
 “ Hang him, hang him, hang him.”

Enter Officer.

Pri. News, what news ?

[Officer whispers Priuli]

Offi. Most sad, Sir ;
 Jaffier, upon the scaffold, to prevent
 A shameful death, stabb'd Pierre, and next himself ;
 Both fell together.

Pri. Daughter.

Bel. Ha ! look there !

My husband bloody and his friend too ! Murder !
 Who has done this ? Speak to me, thou sad vision :
 On these poor trembling knees I beg it. Vanish'd—
 Here they went down—Oh, I'll dig, dig the den up !
 You shan't delude me thus. Hoa, Jaffier, Jaffier.
 Peep up, and give me but a look. I have him !

L

I've got him, father : Oh ! " now how I'll smuggle him ! "

My love ! my dear ! my blessing ! help me ! help me !
They have hold on me, and drag me to the bottom.

Nay—now they pull so hard—farewel— [Dies.

" *Maid.* She's dead ;

" Breathless and dead."

Pri. Oh ; guard me from the sight on't.

Lead me into some place that's fit for mourning :

Where the free air, light, and the chearful sun,

May never enter : hang it round with black :

Set up one taper, that may last a day,

As long as I've to live ; and there all leave me :

Sparing no tears, when you this tale relate,

But bid all cruel fathers dread my fate.

[*Excunt omnes.*
